

own forces. Zhukov:

Moscow will certainly be held, but for this we need at least two more armies and at least two hundred tanks. Stalin was visibly reassured and ordered that Zhukov phone the General Staff and agree on a location for the two reserve armies he was asking for. Tanks will try to give later.

Together with the chief of staff of the front, V.D. Sokolovsky, they figured out what reserves the commander of Army Group Center had. According to intelligence, the enemy has several more divisions in the rear. However, the troops of the Western Front are at the limit of their capabilities, there are no reserves, especially since in order to repel the strike in the 33rd Army zone in the Kubinka region, units had to be removed

from other directions. Sokolovsky proposed to deploy two reserve armies behind Rokossovsky and Boldin in the regions of Yakhroma and Ryazan, and in case of aggravation of the situation, use them to strengthen the defense.

Zhukov hoped to contain the Germans with his own forces, and when they were completely exhausted, to launch sudden powerful counterattacks with these fresh armies. It is only important that their concentration be carried out in deep secrecy - let von Bock think that we have no more reserves. Zhukov had grounds for such reasoning: the offensive front of the Army Group Center was stretched out, its forces were increasingly dissolving, the tank units were breaking away from the infantry, their communications were being stretched, supplies were difficult, the flanks of the shock groups were exposed. In addition, Konev with his troops hangs from the north.

The development of a secret plan of counterattacks Georgy Konstantinovich instructed Sokolovsky.

It was felt that the situation at the front escalated to the limit. On November 22, units of the 24th Panzer Corps of the 2nd Panzer Group occupied Stalinogorsk, and there was a danger of their breakthrough to Kashira. However, by this time, the German troops were already operating at the limit of what was possible. The Chief of the General Staff of the Ground Forces, General F. Halder, noted on the same day: "The troops are completely exhausted and incapable of an offensive ... Von Bock compares the current situation with the situation in the battle on the Marne (the battle between French and German troops on the Marne River in July-August 1918 during the First World War. - V.D.), indicating that a situation has arisen when the last battalion thrown into battle can decide the outcome of the battle . , made another desperate attempt to break through to Moscow on November 27, this time along the Dmitrov highway. Under pressure from superior enemy forces, the left-flank formations of

the 30th Army withdrew to the eastern bank of the Moscow-Volga Canal. On the night of November 28, the advance detachment of the German 7th Panzer Division captured Yakhroma and the bridge over the canal. At the same time, the 4th Panzer Group increased pressure on the 16th Army and pushed it back. On November 30, the Germans occupied Krasnaya Polyana, approaching Moscow for a cannon shot.

In those days when fierce battles were going on on the outskirts of Moscow, when German soldiers tried to

to see through binoculars life on the streets of the city, the command of the Western Front did not stop working for a minute, the purpose of which was to seize the strategic initiative and eliminate the threat hanging over the capital. By the nature of the actions and the strength of the enemy's blows, Zhukov felt that he had approached a crisis state, when the decisive word should be said by "the last battalion thrown into battle." On November 29, Georgy Konstantinovich reported the situation to Stalin and turned to him with a request to give the order to start a counteroffensive. This time, Stalin was taken by surprise by the proposal of the commander of the Western Front to go into action. After carefully listening to all his arguments, he promised to consult with the General Staff.

The decision was not long in coming. Late in the evening of November 29, the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command agreed with Zhukov's proposal to launch a counteroffensive, brought the general tasks to the commanders of the Western and Southwestern Fronts and demanded from them specific proposals for their implementation. The whole next day, Zhukov and the staff of the front headquarters worked on a plan, which was sent to the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command with a short note to Vasilevsky:

"I ask you to urgently report to the People's Commissar of Defense, Comrade Stalin, the plan of counteroffensive Zap. front and give a directive so that you can start the operation, otherwise you can be late with the preparation.

Zhukov 11/30/41.

The plan of the counteroffensive of the armies of the Western Front itself consisted of five laconic points in the form of explanations for the attached map. It was supposed to start the offensive, "based on the timing of the unloading and concentration of troops and their rearmament: 1st shock, 20th and 16th armies and Golikov's army in the morning of December 3-4, 30th army on December 5-6 ...

The immediate task: to strike at Klin, Solnechnogorsk and in the Istra direction, defeat the main enemy grouping on the right wing and strike at Uzlovaya and Bogoroditsk in the flank and rear of the Guderian group to defeat the enemy on the left wing of the front of the armies of the Western Front.

... In order to pin down the enemy forces on the rest of the front and deprive him of the possibility of transferring troops, the 5th, 33rd, 43rd, 49th and 50th armies of the front on December 4-5 go on the offensive with limited tasks.

... The main aviation grouping ... will be directed to interact with the right strike group and the rest with the left - the army of Lieutenant General Golikov . approved without any changes. A resolution appeared in the upper left corner of the map: "I agree. I. Stalin.

It was decided to involve in the planned operation, in addition to the Western and Southwestern Fronts, the Kalinin Front as well. To support the counteroffensive from the air, in addition to the air forces of the fronts, it was planned to use the aviation of the Moscow defense zone, the Moscow military

district, air defense of Moscow, long-range bomber and two reserve air groups.

The main role in the upcoming counteroffensive was assigned to the troops of the Western Front. The main idea was to strike the right and left wings of the Western Front, separated from each other by 200 kilometers, in cooperation with the Kalinin and South-Western Fronts, to defeat the enemy strike groups that sought to capture Moscow from the north and south. Active actions in the center of the front were to pin down the enemy forces in order to deprive him of the opportunity to transfer troops to strengthen the most important areas.

The troops of the Kalinin Front of Konev were to strike with the forces of their left wing, go to the rear of the enemy's Klin group, and then, in cooperation with the troops of the right wing of the Western Front, destroy it. Tymoshenko's troops of the Southwestern Front were to encircle and destroy the enemy's Yelets-Liven grouping, jeopardizing the rear of the enemy's 2nd Panzer Army, which would contribute to its defeat by the troops of the left wing of the Western Front.

The arrows of the directions of strikes, drawn on the plan-map with a red pencil, show that their depth was limited to a distance of 60 kilometers to the north of the capital and about 100 to the south of it. "For setting more distant and decisive goals for the troops of the front," recalled Zhukov, "we did not yet have the strength. We only tried to push the enemy as far away from Moscow as possible and inflict as many losses on him as possible."²⁷¹ Zhukov had to carry out preparations for a retaliatory strike under the conditions of the continued

offensive of the German troops. The tension is colossal. It was necessary at the same time to restrain here and there the deadly attacks of the Germans ("darn Trishkin's caftan," as Zhukov joked) and under their noses to regroup troops to concentrate forces on the decisive directions of the impending counterattack.

At the most tense moment, Stalin unexpectedly called and gave Zhukov another dressing down. The Supreme Commander was informed that the Germans had taken Dedovsk, and the front commander did not even dream about it. Inflamed, Stalin ordered Zhukov to immediately go to the place, personally organize a counterattack and return Dedovsk. Having contacted Rokossovsky,

Georgy Konstantinovich found out that a mistake had occurred, Dedovsk was in our hands, and the village of Dedovo had been captured. I called Stalin back and reported this. But he did not cancel his orders: go and free Dedovo. The next day I had to report on the execution of the order: the forces of a rifle company, supported by two tanks, drove a German platoon out of the village of Dedovo.

While Zhukov was carrying out his "liberation mission" near the lost village, the enemy went on the offensive in the sector of the 33rd Army, where before that there had been relative calm. Next, the front was suddenly broken through in the center, in the Naro-Fominsk region, and the German units rushed north, to Kubinka, and east, in the direction of Aprelevka. The commander of the Western Front brought tank and rifle units into battle, a number of other units from the reserve, and he himself went to the troops to lead the battle. The enemy could not break through to Kubinka, but in the area

²⁷¹ Zhukov G.K. Memories and reflections. T. 2. S. 247.

Aprelevka, an impressive counterattack was inflicted on him. Soon the situation was restored in the area of Naro-Fominsk, the breakthrough in this sector of the front was liquidated.

By December 5, the troops of the Western Front managed to stop the German troops on the right and left wings. Not only Moscow, but also Tula turned out to be out of reach for him. In twenty days, the enemy advanced 80-110 kilometers, but he did not have the strength for a further offensive. The troops of the Western Front under the leadership of Zhukov managed to finally stop the most powerful enemy grouping, which meant the failure of his last attempt to capture the capital.

"The attack on Moscow failed," Guderian wrote. - All the sacrifices and efforts of our valiant troops were in vain. We have suffered a serious defeat, which, due to the stubbornness of the High Command, led to fatal consequences in the coming weeks. The High Command of the Ground Forces, being far from the front in East Prussia, had no idea about the actual situation of its troops in winter conditions, although it received numerous reports about this. This ignorance of the situation all the time led to new unrealistic demands."²⁷² In the course of preparations for the counteroffensive, the Western Front in late November and early December received 9 rifle and 2 cavalry divisions, 8 rifle and 6 tank brigades, 10

separate tank battalions, 1 I am the shock, 20th and 10th armies from the reserve of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command.²⁷³ By the beginning of the counteroffensive, the troops of the Western, Kalinin and Southwestern Fronts numbered about 1.1 million people, 7652 guns and mortars, 774 tanks and 1000 aircraft. Army Group Center had 1.7 million men, about 13,500 guns and mortars, 1,170 tanks, and 615 aircraft.²⁷⁴ The enemy outnumbered Soviet troops by 1.5 times in personnel, 1.8 times in artillery, and in tanks - 1.5 times and inferior to them only in aviation - 1.6 times. This balance of forces and means shows that Zhukov was walking, and knowing this very well, at a great risk, especially since the quality of training of the troops that arrived at the front was very low due to their insufficient training, crowding and equipment.

But it was a calculated risk. Zhukov took into account the enemy's lack of operational reserves, the fatigue of German soldiers, the problems of material support for the German troops in harsh winter conditions, and the fact that the enemy's strike forces were on lines not prepared to repel oncoming strikes. The favorable configuration of the front line was also taken into account, which made it possible to strike at the flanks of the German groups.

Georgy Konstantinovich these days could not even imagine how right he turned out to be in his forecasts. As it turned out, the Germans were so exhausted that they themselves were about to undertake a retreat. On December 5, the headquarters of Army Group Center sent a combat order

²⁷² Guderian G. Memoirs of a soldier. S. 351.

²⁷³ See: Kalutsky N.V. Battle of Moscow // Military History Journal. 1990. No. 4. S. 26.

²⁷⁴ See: History of the Second World War 1939–1945. T. 4. S. 283–284.

commander of the 4th army, 4th and 3rd tank groups:

"In case there is an order to partially separate from the enemy and to take up defense, the army group establishes the following common line: Narva ponds - the course of the river. Moscow to Karinskoye - Istra reservoir - Senezhskoye lake - the area east of Klin - the left flank of the 36th motorized division in the area of the Volga reservoir ... The start of the withdrawal, which, according to the calculations of the army group, will take two nights, may be scheduled for the evening of December 6, what will be reported in a special order ... So far, we are talking only about preparations for the proposed operation, since the decision of the Fuhrer on this issue is still unknown. 275 The next day this order was confirmed: dated December 5, 1941, will be enforced. The start time of the withdrawal and intermediate milestones will be announced later. ...Immediately begin preparations for the retreat, as well as

destruction of all objects on the territory left to the enemy."276

Subsequently, Zhukov expressed his opinion on the decision of the German command to Konstantin Simonov: "Now in the history of the Great Patriotic War, the fact has long become well-known that by the beginning of our counterattack near Moscow, the German troops had already received an order to retreat ... It was not customary to talk about it. Although, it would seem, the fact that even before our counterattacks the Germans had been placed by the stubbornness of our defense in a critical position, forcing them to retreat, did not in the least diminish the merits of our army, rather the opposite. But, apparently, such a presentation of genuine historical events seemed less heroic at that time, and it was customary to say that we launched our own counterattack against the Germans, who were still continuing to rush towards Moscow. As it turned out later from the documents, on the night when we began our offensive, Brauchitsch had already given the order to retreat to the Nara River, that is, he already understood that they would have to retreat, that they had no other choice. 277 Bearing in mind the experience of fighting on the Nara Khalkhin Gol, Zhukov carried out all the movements of troops before the

offensive, as a rule, at night, and if during the day, then only in difficult weather conditions - snowfalls and blizzards played out favored this. In addition to stealth, it was necessary to use the element of surprise and speed - delay would benefit only the enemy. Therefore, a pause for the transition from defense to counterattack was absolutely excluded. The plans were successful, von Bock remained in the dark.

On December 2–4, specific tasks were assigned to each army. The 1st shock army of Kuznetsov was to first free the group of troops of General Zakharov from the encirclement, and then advance in the direction of Klin and, in cooperation with the 30th army on the right and the 20th army on the left, defeat the Klin-Solnechnogorsk enemy group.

275 Op. Quoted from: The First Catastrophe // Military Historical Journal. 1989. No. 1. S. 45.

276 Ibid.

277 Op. by: Simonov K.M. Notes on the biography of G.K. Zhukov // Military History magazine. 1987. No. 7. S. 48–49.

The commander of the 30th Army, Lelyushenko, was ordered to deliver the main blow around Klin from the north, and the auxiliary one - in the direction of Novo-Zavidovsky and Rogachev. The 20th army of Vlasov

was supposed to capture Solnechnogorsk, bypassing it from the southwest and north.

It was assumed that the 16th army of Rokossovsky, acting to its left, would attack Vereskovo and Zhilino with its right wing, and with its left flank would reach the line of Kryukovo, Bakeevo, Efremovo, Istra, and then advance to the Istra reservoir and the Istra river.

Interacting with the right wing with the 16th Army, Govorov's 5th Army aimed to reach the line Koterevo, Lukino, Ivashkovo, Rybushkino.

On the southern wing of the front, Golikov's 10th reserve army was ordered to deliver the main blow in the direction of Mikhailov, Stalinogorsk, the auxiliary one - through Serebryanye Prudy - in the direction of Venev, Zhurakovo. In an order dated December 4, Zhukov paid "special attention

commanders for combat support of their actions, namely:

a) carefully organized and continuously working intelligence and observation of the battlefield;

b) constant anti-tank defense day and night, especially the flanks and rear of the troops;
c) well-organized

management of units in the company link, battalion, regiment, division;

d) constant concern for people, their rest, raising their spirits, providing warm clothes, food and ammunition. On December 4, Zhukov had

another serious skirmish with Stalin. The Supreme Commander called the headquarters of the Western Front when a meeting of army commanders was being held there. "Zhukov was in suspense," recalled N. Kazmin, an errand officer under Zhukov. - During a conversation with Stalin, Zhukov's face began to become covered with spots and nodules appeared on his cheeks. This was already not good and foreshadowed a quarrel. After listening to Stalin, Zhukov retorted: "In front of me are 4 enemy armies and my own front. I better know what to do. You are there, in the Kremlin, you can place tin soldiers and arrange battles, but I have no time to do this. The Supreme Commander apparently objected to something to Zhukov, who lost his self-control and fired off a clip of swearing in the arena, and then dropped the receiver on the lever. After that, Stalin did not call for a day. I called on December 5 at 24:00 and asked: - Comrade Zhukov, how is Moscow? - I won't give up Moscow. "Then I'll go and rest for a couple of hours."278 Georgy Konstantinovich also mentions a telephone conversation with Stalin in the late evening of December 4, but he does not speak of a quarrel.

However, judging by other evidence, there was still a conflict, although hardly in such a rude and unacceptable form.

At dawn on December 5, the troops of the left wing of the Kalinin Front, and at 14 o'clock - and the right flank of the 5th Army of the Western Front, attacked the enemy. The next day, the 30th, 1st

278 Op. Quoted from: Sokolov B. Unknown Zhukov: a portrait without retouching in the mirror of the era. S. 325.

shock, 20th armies of the right wing and 10th and 13th armies of the left wing of the Western Front. The

transition of the Soviet troops to the counteroffensive gave rise to conflicting feelings among the German leadership. Hitler did not trust the reports of the command of the Ground Forces and considered them exaggerated. At a meeting with Wehrmacht leaders on December 6, he expressed doubts about the success of the Russians: "Even if the armed forces lost 25% of their combat strength, the Russians, despite their threefold advantage in new formations, suffered significantly greater losses in combat strength. And if our divisions hold sections of 30 kilometers along the front, this indicates the insufficient strength of the enemy. The experienced general staff officer, General F. Halder, was more realistic in his assessments of the state of Army Group Center. On December 7, he wrote in his diary: "The most terrible thing, however, is that the OKW (Wehrmacht High Command. - V.D.) does not understand the state of our troops and is patching up holes, instead of making fundamental strategic decisions. One of the decisions of this kind should be an order to withdraw the troops of Army Group Center to the Ruza-Ostashkov line."279

The attacking shaft that fell on the enemy grew, more and more new forces were involved in the counteroffensive. On December 7-8, the 16th Army, the operational groups of Generals F.Ya.Kostenko and P.A.Belov, the 3rd and 50th armies went over to active operations. On the Kalinin, Klin, Solnechnogorsk, Istra, Tula and Yelets directions, the battles unfolded not for life, but for death. On December 8, the enemy was driven out of Kryukov. And Hitler still does not believe that

something serious has begun, posing a real big threat. On December 8, he gives an order in which he assesses the successes of the Soviet troops as temporary, achieved due to their greater adaptability to harsh climatic conditions. At the same time, other notes sounded in the words of the Fuhrer: "The Russians conduct battles of this kind with units and subunits that cannot be called first-class, on the contrary, these are, as a rule, the worst and unprepared forces, which, as experience has shown, are often inferior to our troops in terms of numbers, contrary to the preliminary data of the first reports on the course of the battle. From this it follows that battles of this kind are won first of all by the strength of the nerves, and this concerns chiefly the command. The Russians in this case proved the strength of their nerves." Well, this is a serious confession, and it should be attributed primarily to Zhukov. In the final part of the order, the German troops were instructed "not to allow the superiority of the enemy." The only way to reliably finish him off is through fierce resistance, "which will cost the attacker great losses in manpower." German

troops were allowed to withdraw only if "in their previous positions they cannot, due to lack of ammunition or food, cause damage to the enemy." The command of the Army Group "Center" was to take decisive action against the civilian population. During the retreat, the settlements were to be burned so that the Soviet troops were deprived of normal accommodation for rest. Otherwise how

279 Halder F. Military diary. 06/22/1941–09/24/1942. S. 445.

the requirement to take away winter clothes from prisoners of war and civilians to meet the needs of the German troops cannot be called barbaric. According to Field Marshal von

Bock, in the current situation it was "pointless to demand that the troops not take a single step back. In fact, it was impossible for Army Group Center to both retreat and conduct deterrent battles, since both led to heavy casualties.

Due to significant losses in military equipment, von Bock united the 3rd and 4th tank groups under the command of General E. Hepner, concentrating forces to hold the Klin, through which a significant number of troops were withdrawing. Every opportunity was used to contain the onslaught of the 20th and especially the 16th armies, since the breakthrough of the defense by their formations threatened the main parts of the group with encirclement in the area of Klin, Solnechnogorsk and the Istra reservoir. The main frontier, on which it was supposed to stop the offensive of the troops of the Western and Kalinin fronts, was to be the rivers Lama, Ruza and Nara. The natural frontiers, convenient for defense, were supplemented here by numerous engineering structures, the construction of which began as early as the beginning of December. During the retreat, bridges were blown up, settlements were burned, roads were mined. And yet we have not yet learned how to attack properly. The troops lacked experience, the commanders lacked the ability to competently organize attacking actions. There was not

enough determination to make full use of the difficult situation in which the enemy found himself. The syndrome of the first weeks and months of the war affected - the fear of being surrounded. Therefore, the numerous gaps that formed in the line of defense of the retreating enemy were used sluggishly, units and formations were reluctantly introduced into the breakthroughs. Let's once again give credit to Zhukov: he very quickly and accurately felt these shortcomings. Already on December 9, the command of the Western Front issued an order that makes serious adjustments to the tactics of offensive operations:

"To all armies and the Belov group

Copy: to Comrade Shaposhnikov 1.

The enemy, under the blows of the troops of the Western Front, began a hasty retreat on their flanks. In some places, the enemy abandons vehicles, equipment and weapons. The

enemy, pulling back his flanks, apparently seeks to level his front, put himself in order, replenish and prepare for a new operation. 2. The main task of the troops of the Western Front is

to break the enemy's flank groupings as quickly as possible, capture his technical means, transport, weapons and, rapidly moving forward in the girth of his flank groupings, finally encircle and destroy all enemy armies opposing our Western front. 3. The practice of advancing and pursuing the enemy shows that some of our units are completely wrong in combat, and instead of moving forward rapidly by bypassing the enemy's rearguards, they are engaged in a

protracted frontal battle with him. Instead of detours and encirclement, the enemy is pushed out from the front by a frontal offensive,

instead of seeping between the enemy's fortifications, they mark time in front of these fortifications, complaining about the difficulties of fighting and heavy losses. All these negative ways of conducting a battle play into the hands of

the enemy, giving him the opportunity to systematically withdraw to new lines with small losses, put himself in order and again organize resistance to our troops. I order: 1. It is strictly forbidden to conduct frontal battles with enemy covering units, to prohibit frontal battles against fortified positions. Against the rearguards and fortified positions, leave small barriers and quickly go

around them, going

as deep as possible into the path of the enemy's withdrawal. 2. Form several strike groups from the army consisting of tanks, submachine gunners, cavalry and, under the leadership of brave commanders, throw them behind enemy lines to destroy fuel and artillery thrust. 3. Drive the enemy day and night. In case of fatigue of parts

allocate pursuit units.

4. To ensure the actions of our troops with anti-tank defense, reconnaissance and constant security, bearing in mind that the enemy, when withdrawing, will look for an opportunity to counterattack our units. 5. What you have done, report immediately. Zhukov Bulganin Sokolovsky December 9, 1941, 3:45 pm.280

On December 11, Soviet troops occupied Istra, on the 12th - Solnechnogorsk, and on the left wing of the Western Front they forced the formations of the 2nd Panzer Army of General Guderian to withdraw from Tula. The advance of Soviet troops northwest of Moscow caused

great anxiety and disagreement among the German command. In an attempt to calm the retreating forces, the Commander-in-Chief of the Ground Forces, Brauchitsch, sent a telegram to the troops of the Army Group Center, in which he said that all the difficulties experienced by the German soldiers were known to the top leadership, and measures were being taken to improve their situation. On December 13, he flew to Smolensk. Von Bock, describing the plight of the German troops and the threat of defeat looming over them, asked Brauchitsch to think about replacing him "due to the decline of physical strength."

An objective analysis of the situation required the withdrawal of Army Group Center. However, without the knowledge of Hitler, Brauchitsch did not dare to take this step. He turned to Hitler's adjutant, Colonel Schmudt, who was at the headquarters of Army Group Center, with a request to help the Fuhrer give permission for the retreat. On December 15, consent was given for the withdrawal of the troops of the 3rd and 4th Panzer Groups and the right wing of the 9th Army to the line of Ruza, Volokolamsk, Staritsa, but already in the afternoon this order was unexpectedly canceled. Hitler still hoped for a quick change in the situation near Moscow. On the night of December 15, he summoned the commander of the army of the reserve, General F. Frank, with a report on

280 Op. Quoted from: Krasnov V.G. Unknown Zhukov. pp. 283–284.

readiness of formations to be sent to combat areas. General R. Gercke and Reichsmarschall G. Goering received an order to prepare all Wehrmacht transport for the immediate transfer of reserve divisions and units by air to the Eastern Front. Sending reinforcements to Moscow, Hitler did not hide his irritation: "I

cannot send everyone to the winter cold just because there are several breakthroughs on the front of the army group." On December 16, an urgent meeting of the Wehrmacht leadership was held at Hitler's headquarters, at which the Fuhrer gave the order to "hold the front to the last soldier ... The commanders, commanders and officers, personally influencing the troops, do everything possible to force them to hold their positions and put up stubborn resistance to the enemy, breaking through on the flanks and in the rear. Only this kind of tactics can buy the time needed to transfer reinforcements from Germany ... Only when the reserves arrive at the cut-off positions, it will be possible to think about withdrawing to these lines. General G. Blumentritt, former chief of staff of the 4th Army of the Center group, later noted: "His fanatical order obliging the troops to fight steadfastly in every position and in the most adverse conditions was, of course, correct. Hitler instinctively realized that any retreat over snow and ice in a few days would lead to the collapse of the entire front, and then the German army would suffer the same fate as Napoleon's Grand Army. The division was not allowed to retreat more than 5-10 kilometers in one night. More could not be demanded from the troops and horse-drawn transport in those incredibly difficult conditions. Since all the roads were covered with snow, they had to retreat through open areas. After several nights of such a retreat, the soldiers were so exhausted that, stopping, they simply lay down on the snow and froze. In the rear there were no pre-prepared positions where the troops could retreat ... Thus, over the course of many weeks, the battlefield slowly moved west.

At the same time, Hitler became convinced that Brauchitsch, like von Bock, was incapable of leading troops in a crisis. The Fuhrer took over the leadership of the salvation of the Eastern Front, deciding to personally become the head of the Ground Forces. There was also a reason to replace General Field Marshal F. von Bock - an exacerbation of a stomach ulcer. Hitler suggested that he take a long leave to improve his health.²⁸¹ General Field Marshal H. G. Kluge, who had previously led the troops of the 4th Army, was appointed commander of Army Group Center on December 18.

Meanwhile, the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command hurried the Western Front to develop and consolidate its success. In order to prevent the withdrawal of the German 3rd and 4th tank groups to the Volokolamsk-Ruza line, by order of December 13, the commanders of the 30th and 1st shock armies, Lelyushenko and Kuznetsov, were ordered to accelerate the pace of the offensive and surround the enemy in the Klin area.

On the same day, Zhukov sent an order to the armies of the right wing of the Western Front, in which he defined new offensive lines and placed personal responsibility for reaching them on the army commanders. The order categorically forbade "frontal attacks of the enemy's fortified nodes of resistance. head

²⁸¹ See: Mitcham S., Muller J. Commanders of the Third Reich // Per. from English. Smolensk, 1997, pp. 74-75.

echelons, without delay, go around them, placing the destruction of these knots on subsequent echelons. "282

The 30th and 1st shock armies, despite the stubborn resistance of the enemy, coped with their tasks. By 2 o'clock on December 15, the liberation of Klin was completed. A few days later, British Foreign Secretary A. Eden arrived in the city with a group of diplomats and correspondents. "I was happy to see some of the exploits of the Russian armies, truly magnificent exploits," he told the Pravda newspaper. For the first time, the Wehrmacht troops suffered such an impressive defeat and were forced to retreat, suffering

significant losses. During the 11 days of the offensive, formations and units of the right wing of the Western Front were able to overcome from 30 to 65 kilometers.

The offensive also developed successfully on the left wing of the front, in the zone of the 50th and 10th armies. Here, on December 11, after stubborn fighting, a group of troops of General P.A. Belov liberated Stalinogorsk (Novomoskovsk). Zhukov immediately decides to encircle and destroy the German group operating on the northern and eastern approaches to Tula by the joint efforts of the troops of the Belov group and the 50th Army. But General Guderian turned out to be more agile and managed to withdraw troops from the bag east of Tula. An attempt is being made to encircle the enemy with a deeper encirclement south of Tula. But even here Guderian managed to wriggle out. And yet the offensive of the left wing of the Western Front, although slowly, continued to develop.

An irresistible desire to defeat the faltering enemy as soon as possible played a cruel joke on Zhukov. In his actions, unfounded optimism and an overestimation of the capabilities of his troops became noticeable. At the same time, the combat effectiveness and organization of the enemy were clearly underestimated. For example, the Headquarters set the pace of advance for the armies of the right wing of the Western Front within 10-15 kilometers per day, and Zhukov increased it to 20-25 kilometers, that is, almost doubled. It was practically impossible to achieve this: on the right wing, the troops covered up to six kilometers a day, on the left - up to ten.

Excessive fervor gave rise to miscalculations. The troops of the enemy's 3rd and 4th tank groups, after being defeated at the Istra line, hurriedly retreated to new positions on the Lama and Ruza rivers. Zhukov believed that he was dealing only with the rearguards of the enemy. Therefore, on December 20, he demanded that the armies of the right wing of the front (1st shock, 20th, 5th and 16th armies) continue non-stop movement and on December 27 reach the line of Zubtsov, Gzhatsk (now Gagarin) west of the Lama and Ruza rivers. But the planned non-stop offensive did not work out - our troops unexpectedly stumbled upon strong defensive lines and powerful fire screens. To Zhukov's credit, he drew conclusions from mistakes in offensive operations in a timely manner. The front

commander persistently demanded that troops be withdrawn to the flanks and rear of the retreating enemy, put subunits on skis, penetrate deep behind enemy lines and inflict panic on his troops with daring raids. He constantly warned the army commanders and commanders of formations about the inadmissibility of frontal attacks and attempts to act ahead, that, in addition to unjustified losses,

282 Op. Quoted from: Krasnov V.G. Unknown Zhukov. pp. 285-286.

didn't bring any results. In one of his directives, Zhukov pointed to examples "when commanders of units and formations kill hundreds and thousands of people when attacking an undestroyed enemy defense and undestroyed machine guns, unsuppressed strongholds, with poor organization of the offensive." It is interesting that the enemy also gave similar assessments to the actions of the attackers. The Bulletin of the German Army of January 14, 1942 noted that the Russians "rarely use artillery preparation for an attack ... Russian attacks, as a rule, follow this pattern once and for all - in large masses of people and are repeated several times ... sparing no effort and nothing changing ... Our fine small arms are able to withstand the mass offensive of the Russians.

In a special directive to the military councils of the armies of the Western Front dated December 22, Zhukov gave the following instructions: "In the event of enemy resistance on the entire front and the impossibility of bypassing his defenses, collect a mass of artillery, PC, mortars on a narrow front and give such destructive fire, from which the defense will most likely be suppressed enemy. After such powerful preparations, boldly throw infantry with the entire mass of tanks on a narrow front, accompanying them all the time with artillery fire and air combat operations. ... Commanders who show

indecision in defeating the enemy should be removed as incapable of leading units forward and overcoming difficulties.²⁸³ On December 23, Zhukov signs a directive that reveals

serious shortcomings in the actions of the troops of the 20th Army: "Contrary to the instructions of the Front Military Council, break through

the defenses in a narrow sector The 20th army is attacking on the entire front of the army and, as a result, has no success.

... Explain and demand from the commanders of the breakthrough units, whatever no matter what, otherwise the enemy may intensify in the near future.

... The breakthrough is led personally by the Military Council. However, despite Zhukov's insistent demands, the troops of the right wing of the Western Front were never able to break through the enemy's defenses on the lines of the Lama and Ruza rivers. Only the 20th Army, after 18 days of fierce fighting, managed to capture a small bridgehead on the western bank of the Lama. The enemy in the period from December 20, 1941 to January 7, 1942 firmly held the defense, eliminating all attempts by the troops of the 1st shock, 16th and 5th armies to wedge into it. On the left wing of the Western Front, on

December 30, the Germans were driven out of Kaluga. In early January 1942, Soviet troops reached the area of the Kaluga-Maloyaroslavets railway (49th Army) and advanced 15-25 kilometers towards Yukhnov (50th Army), and the 10th Army approached the Vyazma-Bryansk railway west and southwest of Kaluga. At this point, the offensive of the left wing troops stopped.

In the center of the Western Front, the counteroffensive began later, on 18 December. Before these armies of the central sector, the task was only to pin down the 4th field army of the Germans in order to deprive them of the opportunity to transfer troops to other sectors of the front. However, the German command, taking advantage of the sluggishness of the Soviet troops,

²⁸³ Op. Quoted from: G.K. Zhukov in the Battle of Moscow. Collection of documents. S. 86.

managed to transfer part of the forces to the Rzhev and Tula directions. As a result, the resistance of the enemy's flank groupings north and south of Moscow increased again. This forced Zhukov late at night on December 16 to demand that the armies of the center continue "non-stop pursuit of the enemy" and on December 19 to take control of the line west of the Nara River. But nothing came of this, and protracted battles continued to go on in their previous positions. Only after the occupation of Kaluga by the Soviet troops and the threat of their exit to the rear of the 4th German field army, the enemy on December 24 began to withdraw his troops to a new line of defense. During the counteroffensive, G.K. Zhukov led the fighting from the command post in

Perkhushkovo. Events developed rapidly and continuously, so he went to the troops only in cases of emergency. I managed to visit during this period the armies of Rokossovsky, Govorov, Golubev, Zakharov, mainly in order to help the commanders coordinate their actions with their neighbors. In the Naro-Fominsk, Kamenka sector, the troops of Golubev's 43rd Army could not overturn the enemy from their positions for a long time. Zhukov twice, on December 21 and 24, went

to the front line, got acquainted with the situation on the spot, and talked with regimental commanders. Together with the commander of the army, he went to the front line, into the trenches. Pulling up reserves and regrouping troops, he was eventually able to break through the enemy's front line. On December 26, Naro-Fominsk was liberated. On the same day, the 33rd and 43rd armies were ordered to start pursuing the enemy in the Mozhaisk and Maloyaroslavets directions. As a result, by the end of December, Soviet troops reached the Protva and

Luzha rivers, liberated Maloyaroslavets on January 2, 1942, and Borovsk on January 4. But the enemy stopped their further advance. In January 1942, a Mongolian delegation arrived on the Western Front with gifts for Soviet soldiers, headed by Kh. Choibalsan. Zhukov warmly welcomed his friends from Khalkhin Gol. The delegation spent several days on the Western Front, and returning to Moscow, Choibalsan invited

Zhukov to his place and presented him with the Mongolian Order of the Red Banner. The counteroffensive of the Soviet troops in the western strategic direction was of great importance not only militarily, but also received a great political response. For the first time in World War II, it was possible to first stop the German army, which considered itself invincible, and then inflict a sensitive defeat on it. The Red Army pushed the enemy

back 100-250 kilometers from Moscow and eliminated the threat to the Soviet capital. The German troops lost their strategic initiative, the idea of a lightning defeat of the USSR turned out to be too presumptuous. The prospect of a protracted war loomed ahead. But still, the situation of the German troops in December 1941 was by no means as deplorable as it was customary for us to talk about it, especially in Soviet times. The German military machine failed, but did not lose its power.

In the end, the offensive capabilities of the armies of the Western Front dried up, the surprise factor exhausted itself, and the enemy managed to organize a fairly strong defense on the new lines. Let's not forget that the Soviet troops launched a counteroffensive without having

general superiority over the enemy.

G.K. Zhukov believed that the next stage of the offensive in the western direction "should have been to, having received reinforcement with appropriate forces and means, continue it until it is completed." He considered it possible to restore the position that the Kalinin, Western and Bryansk fronts occupied before the start of the offensive operation of the Nazi troops. In his opinion, if the Headquarters gave "at least four armies to reinforce (one each for the Kalinin and Bryansk fronts and two for the Western Front), we would get a real opportunity to inflict a stronger blow on the enemy and push him even further away from Moscow, and possibly, even reach the Vitebsk-Smolensk-Bryansk line."²⁸⁴

Without additional large reserves, further advance to the west is impossible. With this, Zhukov arrived in the Kremlin on the evening of January 5, 1942 for an expanded meeting of the Headquarters, where it was planned to discuss the plan for the upcoming military operations. In addition to I.V. Stalin and G.K. Zhukov, B.M. Shaposhnikov, K.E. attended Voroshilov, the meeting of G.M.

Stalin proposed launching a decisive offensive in three strategic directions - northwestern, western and southwestern - in order to defeat the main groupings of enemy troops and, without giving them a respite, continue the onslaught and force them to use up their reserves before spring. It was assumed that by this time the Soviet troops would have new large reserves, which would make it possible to complete the complete defeat of the Nazi troops in 1942. The main blow was planned to be delivered in the western direction, against the most powerful enemy grouping - Army Group Center. This task should be

entrusted to the left wing of the North-Western Front, the Kalinin, Western and Bryansk fronts, which, by enveloping the main enemy forces on both sides, encircle and destroy them in the area of Rzhev, Vyazma and Smolensk. The troops of the Leningrad, Volkhov fronts, the right wing of the North-Western Front and the Baltic Fleet were tasked with defeating Army Group North and eliminating the blockade of Leningrad. The troops of the South-Western and Southern Fronts defeat the Army Group "South" and liberate the Donbass, and the Caucasian Front and the Black Sea Fleet - the Crimea. The transition to a general offensive was supposed to be carried out in an extremely short time.

Zhukov expressed his point of view on the Stavka's plans. He believed that in the western direction, where the most favorable conditions had been created and the enemy had not yet managed to restore the combat capability of his units, it was necessary to continue the offensive. But for its successful outcome, it is necessary to strengthen the fronts of the western direction, replenish their troops with personnel and military equipment, primarily tank units, and create strong reserves. As for the offensive of the Soviet troops near Leningrad and in the southwestern direction, they will have to deal with serious enemy defenses there. Without the presence of powerful artillery weapons, they will not be able to break through the defenses, they themselves will be exhausted and suffer heavy, unjustified losses.

²⁸⁴ Zhukov G.K. Memories and reflections. T. 2. S. 252.

Voroshilov and Malenkov did not agree with Zhukov's opinion not to hurry with the offensive near Leningrad and in the south. However, Georgy Konstantinovich was supported by N.A. Voznesensky, Deputy Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR, who stated that at the present time we still do not have the material capabilities sufficient to ensure the simultaneous offensive of all fronts. Stalin was clearly unhappy with this turn of affairs.

But Zhukov argued in vain - the question was already a foregone conclusion. After the meeting, he learned from Shaposhnikov that the corresponding directives had already been given to almost all fronts, and they would begin the offensive in the next few days.

Zhukov received the order to attack late in the evening on January 7, 1942. Its essence was, firstly, to direct all further efforts of the troops to the encirclement of the Rzhev-Vyazma grouping of the enemy, and secondly, to begin the operation immediately. To this end, the Headquarters ordered: the Kalinin Front to strike in the direction of Rzhev and Vyazma, the Western - in the direction of Yekhnov and Vyazma. By joint efforts, they were supposed to "encircle, and then capture or destroy" the entire Rzhev-Vyazma grouping of the enemy. In addition, the Western Front had to break through the enemy defenses on the Lama River with the forces of the 20th Army.

Perhaps the fact that these plans were not provided with either forces or means was understood not only by Zhukov and Voznesensky, but by the entire Headquarters, headed by the Supreme Commander. It was hoped that the fronts would be able to crush the enemy's defenses if their command would be strictly guided by the principle of a massive concentration of forces and would be able to skillfully use artillery. But after all, there was no experience for this yet - remember, even the Germans near Moscow were perplexed why the Russians used artillery so poorly before the offensive. In addition, the troops were not provided with the proper amount of ammunition. Zhukov reported to Stalin: "The lack of shells makes it impossible to

carry out an artillery attack. As a result, the enemy's fire system is not destroyed and our units, attacking the weakly suppressed enemy defenses, suffer very heavy losses. But the Supreme Commander, impressed by the defeat of the Germans near Moscow and the successes achieved during the counteroffensive, was confident. It is too optimistic to think about the price of new victories under these conditions.

On January 8, 1942, the troops of the Kalinin Front, the left wing and center of the Western Front, were the first to go on the offensive, and on January 10, the armies of the right wing of the Western Front. As a result of fierce fighting from January 8 to 15, the 39th Army of the Kalinin Front entered the areas west and southwest of Rzhev, and the left-flank armies of the Western Front (43rd, 49th and 50th armies) entered the Yekhnov area. Here they were forced to go on the defensive at lines 70–75 kilometers north and southeast of Vyazma. They failed to use the favorable conditions created to encircle the Rzhev-Vyazma grouping of the enemy. Replenishment did not wait, and the power of the shock groups was lost.

On the right wing of the Western Front, Zhukov was able to make full use of the advantageous operational position of the 20th Army, which had a bridgehead on the western bank of the Lama and was supposed to advance along

Volokolamsk highway, which made it possible to successfully solve the issues of maneuver and the supply of materiel during the offensive - after all, the winter was snowy. Here the front commander created a shock group, reinforcing it with cavalry, rifle and ski formations, units and subunits, artillery and tanks from the 1st shock and 16th armies. Perhaps, for the first time in the entire war, it was possible to create a high density of troops in the area of breaking through the enemy's defenses and surpass the enemy several times in strength and means. And all this was done without reserves, by attracting forces from other areas of the Western Front.

Despite a strong snowstorm, after an hour and a half of artillery preparation, the troops of the shock group of the Western Front on January 10 went on the offensive. Enemy attempts to restore the lost position by counterattacks did not achieve their goal. The breakthrough in the enemy defenses on Lama was significantly expanded and deepened. The troops of the right wing of the Western Front had the opportunity to build on success in the direction of Gzhatsk and reach the flank of the enemy's 4th Panzer Army. But Zhukov's plans were confused by the Headquarters.

On January 19, the headquarters of the Western Front received an order to withdraw from the battle the 1st Shock Army, which was being transferred to reinforce the North-Western Front. Zhukov tried to explain to Stalin that such a decision was unacceptable until the end of the offensive.

But Stalin, as we know, did not cancel his orders. And then, as luck would have it, the enemy launched a strong counterattack on the troops of the left wing of the Western Front in the Sukhinichi area, and Zhukov was forced to send the 16th Army there. As a result, units of the 20th Army were dispersed over a wide front, and the strike force of its troops was significantly weakened. It took time to regroup the troops, and the command of the Western Front just didn't have it.

On January 19, the 33rd Army captured Vereya. The next day, in the center of the front, the troops of the 5th Army liberated Mozhaisk and reached the western border of the Moscow Region. To the south, the right-flank divisions of the 43rd Army were rapidly advancing westward. As a result, at the junction of the flanks of the 33rd and 43rd armies, a corridor weakly defended by the enemy was formed, about 35-40 kilometers wide. Zhukov decided to immediately take advantage of this circumstance and push forward the troops of the 33rd Army through the gap that had formed with the task of delivering a strike "on Vyazma or bypassing it from the southwest" with the main forces. At the same time, on January 18-22, by order of Zhukov, an airborne assault force was dropped south of Vyazma to assist the 1st Guards Cavalry Corps of General P. A. Belov, who operated on the left wing of the Western Front, also trying to break through the enemy defenses in the direction of Vyazma.

On January 20, Zhukov sent an order to Belov: "I strictly forbid going on the defensive anywhere. If there is a gap, drive everything into this gap and deploy this gap with a blow to the flanks ... The enemy is running along the entire front. Let's go to Vyazma as soon as possible."²⁸⁵

The commander of the 33rd Army, General Efremov, he punishes "not to get involved in battle, to quickly go to the designated area; With

²⁸⁵ Op. Quoted from: G.K. Zhukov in the Battle of Moscow. Collection of documents. pp. 100-101.

exit to the designated area, contact the landing force in the area of Znamenka, Zhelanie and be ready, without stopping, for the exit to the area west of Vyazma. To ensure action, now pull up the army's rear, reserves, all material support and management. The army headquarters should not break away from the main grouping ... Press. You can distinguish yourself as never before.”²⁸⁶ On January 26, units of the 11th Cavalry Corps of the Kalinin

Front broke through into the areas west of Vyazma, and managed to cut the Minsk highway and the railway to Smolensk. To reinforce the group of General Belov and interact with the 11th Cavalry Corps, from January 27 to February 2, a new airborne assault force of more than two thousand people was thrown into the area southwest of Vyazma. On January 30, General Belov's cavalry united with the paratroopers and moved to Vyazma. It seemed that the city was about to be taken. On the same day, Zhukov demanded that the commander of the 33rd Army quickly move forward to the west.

Haste gave rise to a mistake: the flanks of the shock group of army troops turned out to be unsecured. The neighbors on the right and left received the task of advancing in divergent directions: the 5th Army - on Gzhatsk, the 43rd Army - on Yukhnov. In fact, the divisions of the shock group of the 33rd Army were thrown into the rear of the enemy to their fate, without air cover, without organizing the supply of food, ammunition, and fuel. General Efremov repeatedly appeals to the military council of the front with a request to provide reinforcements for the army. On January 30, he sends another request:

"Chief of Staff of the Western Front. 1. The replenishment you promised for the 33rd Army has not yet arrived. 2.

Replenishment is urgently needed. 3. When

will the 33rd Army receive reinforcements? Please let me know. The army has been in battles since 12/18/1941

continuously.”²⁸⁷ Efremov tries to organize cover for the flanks of the army strike group on his own and goes to Iznoski for this. But the order immediately follows: “Comrade.

Efremov. 1/30/1942 Your task is near Vyazma, and not in the area of Iznoski. Leave Kondratiev (Chief of Staff of the 33rd Army. - V.D.) in Iznoski. Go ahead on your own right now. Zhukov.”²⁸⁸ Zhukov handed over to Yefremov the

9th Guards

Rifle Division from the front reserve, which began its movement towards Vyazma along the corridor punched by the strike group of the 33rd Army. The number of the division was about 10 thousand people, more than the entire strike group of the 33rd Army. Soon, its commander, General A.P. Beloborodov, “became clear that the fascist troops had taken decisive action in order to” chop up ”the base of the breakthrough of the shock group of the 33rd Army and surround

²⁸⁶ Ibid. S. 101.

²⁸⁷ Op. Quoted from: Krasnov V.G. Unknown Zhukov. S. 305.

²⁸⁸ Ibid. S. 306.

her."289 Despite this, Beloborodov's division was transferred to the disposal of the 43rd Army. At the same time, the commander of the 43rd Army, Golubev, informed Zhukov about the impending threat to Efremov's rear, that the enemy was on the outskirts of Iznoski from the north and northwest. But Zhukov ordered him to move on, not looking back at Efremov.

Having received a report that the group of General Belov attacked Vyazma from the west, Zhukov immediately ordered the commander of the 33rd Army, General Efremov, to attack from the south and southeast. The absence of a solid front gave Zhukov reason to believe that the Germans did not have sufficient forces in this direction to reliably defend the city. Therefore, the decision was made: until the enemy brought up reserves here, to capture Vyazma on the move. Understanding the strategic importance of Vyazma for

the entire Army Group Center, the Germans defended themselves with bitterness. First, they threw back the 11th Cavalry Corps of the Kalinin Front to the north. The strike group of the 33rd Army and the group of troops of General Belov, who launched an attack on the city, were met by the enemy with well-organized fire of all kinds and frequent infantry counterattacks, supported by tanks and aircraft. It was not possible to occupy Vyazma on the move. Moreover, striking from the north and south under the base of the breakthrough, the enemy cut off part of the troops of the 33rd Army and Belov's group from the main forces of the front and restored their defenses along the Ugra River. As a result, the troops of the Western Front, who were trying to surround the Vyazma grouping of the enemy, themselves were cut off.

Not expecting such a turn of events, Zhukov reacted very sharply to the changes in the situation. From the commander of the 43rd Army, Golubev, he demanded that the situation be urgently restored. The battalion, which defended the flanks and was crushed by the enemy, Zhukov ordered "to return back those responsible for the surrender of this especially important point (the village of Zakharovo. - V.D.) to arrest, judge and shoot on the spot, regardless of the number." Generals Efremov and Belov were ordered to "accelerate the capture of Vyazma, using time while the enemy is still weak."

Obviously, Zhukov had not yet taken seriously what was happening near Vyazma, considering a temporary setback as an unfortunate misunderstanding. Reassuring Efremov that only rear units of the enemy allegedly act against him, Zhukov at the same time reproached him that "the units behave criminally badly, succumbing to panic and disorder", and demanded from the general "all cowards, alarmists, provocateurs to judge and shoot in front of the ranks". Efremov had to take care of material resources himself: "... we will look for food on the spot, we will not serve it, there are no planes, we will also look for shells on the spot."

General Efremov, having received on January 21 Zhukov's order to "press", tried to fulfill it at all costs. However, the enemy, taking advantage of the fact that the 33rd Army and Belov's group of troops were advancing without regard to their flanks and rear, quickly slammed the trap. In the current situation, the encircled troops of the Western Front had, willy-nilly, to switch to full self-sufficiency and establish close cooperation with local partisans, turning their main thoughts to enemy warehouses. The situation was extremely difficult, the troops suffered heavy combat and sanitary losses. For example,

289 Beloborodov A.P. Always in battle. M., 1979. S. 135.

by February 7, only the number of Belov's group had decreased from 28 thousand people to 6 thousand, of which one and a half thousand were wounded.

Zhukov quickly realized his mistake and organized an attack from outside to break through the enemy defenses in the Yukhnov area and establish direct contact with the encircled Vyazma group of troops. On February 14, he persistently asks the commander of the 43rd Army, Golubev, "to quickly get through to Efremov ... clear his rear routes, supply him with ammunition and withdraw 1,000 wounded from there." Golubev promises to immediately form and send a detachment led by the best commander and military commissar to help Efremov. "Before that, having your instructions, we formed and sent three detachments on skis, up to a company each..." Zhukov: "Promise is a good thing. But I prefer performance, and with performance we are very slow. Understand that people are paying for this with their lives, who, dying, cannot thank you. We will consider your proposal. Now take all measures to ensure that ... parts would enter into contact with Efremov. "290

Along with counterattacks near Vyazma, the enemy suddenly attacked the main grouping of troops of the Kalinin Front and cut off the 29th and 39th armies (in total - four divisions out of seven), together with the 11th cavalry corps, from the main forces of the front. As a result of the subsequent active actions of the Germans on February 5, the encirclement around the 29th Army closed. For more than two weeks, she had to fight in an environment from which only about 3.5 thousand people came out - all that was left of the army. The German command, skillfully maneuvering forces and means,

gradually nullified the January successes of the troops of the Western Front. Having eliminated the gaps near Yukhnov and Rzhev, the enemy was able to restore a solid front line. Everything indicated that the offensive potential of the troops of the Western Direction had been exhausted. However, Stalin thought otherwise. Let us mention that in the midst of the events near Vyazma, on February 1, 1942, Stalin and Shaposhnikov signed a directive,

which, in order to close cooperation between the Western and Kalinin fronts of the Western direction. Zhukov was appointed commander-in-chief (while retaining the post of commander of the Western Front), and Lieutenant General Golikov was his restored position of commander-in-chief deputy. On February 16, the commander-in-chief of the western direction receives an order from the Headquarters: "1. The troops of the Western Front, with the assistance of the 39th, 29th, 22nd, 30th and

31st armies and the 11th cavalry corps of the Kalinin Front, defeat and destroy the Rzhev-

Vyazma-Yukhnovskaya enemy grouping and by March 5, go out and gain a foothold on our old defensive line with ready-made Olenino anti-tank ditches, Oletskoe, Bulashevo and further along the river. Dnieper through Blagoveshchenskoye to the city of Dorogobuzh including, Usvyatie, Yelnya and further along the river. Desna to Snopot. 2. In addition, on March 5, 42, the troops of the Western Front to defeat

Bolkhovo-Zhizdra-Bryansk enemy grouping and, having destroyed it, take Bryansk and gain a foothold on our old defensive line with ready-made anti-tank ditches along the river. Desna from Snopot to Yadrovo and further along the line to Vysokoye, Krasnoe, Sosnovka. 3. Order Deputy. Commissar of Defense Comrade Shchadenko, during

the period from February 16 to February 25, submit to the Western Front, in addition to loaded ones on the way, 60 thousand trained reinforcements to the points at the direction of the Commander-in-Chief of the Western Direction.

4. By order of the head of the GABTU (the main armored department. - V.D.), within the time period from February 16 to 25, submit 40 KV tanks, 80 T-34 tanks and 80 T-60 tanks to the points on the Western Front at the direction of the Commander-in-Chief of the Western Direction .

5. To the Commander of the Air Force of the Spacecraft, within two days, transfer to the Western Front 20 Il-2 aircraft and 20 Yak-1 aircraft without crews. The crews for all the indicated aircraft should be sent by order of the Commander-in-Chief of the Western Direction.

6. To the commander of the airborne troops, from February 17, to transfer the 9th and 214th airborne brigades to the command of the Commander-in-Chief of the Western Direction for the Yukhnov operation. Deputy Commander of the Air Force Comrade Novikov and Deputy. Commissar of Defense Comrade Gromadin to ensure the landing on the instructions of the Commander-in-Chief of the Western Direction.

7. To carry out the operation to defeat the Bolkhov-Zhizda Bryansk grouping of the enemy, transfer the 5th Guards Rifle Corps of the 97th, 116th and 149th divisions to the disposal of the Commander-in-Chief of the Western Direction upon their arrival at the unloading points no later than February 25th.

Headquarters of the Supreme High Command I.
Stalin B.
Shaposhnikov.291

But, as expected, despite the requirements of the Headquarters and the reinforcements provided, the troops of the Western Direction could not achieve further success. Instead of advancing to a depth of 120-140 kilometers until March 5, as desired by the Supreme Commander-in-Chief, the troops were essentially marking time. All their attempts to defeat the enemy, or at least connect with the 33rd Army encircled near Vyazma and the Belov group with paratroopers, failed. True, after long and stubborn fighting, units of the 49th Army finally managed to occupy Yukhnov. But that's where it all ended.

All subsequent orders, instructions, exhortations, threats did not help either. The existing nervous atmosphere in the command circles of the troops is well reflected in the records of Zhukov's negotiations with the commander of the 49th Army, General I. G. Zakharkin. March 6, 1942:

"... Zhukov · You didn't answer that question, I asked you if you don't consider it insulting to stagnate in front of the rearguards of two very weak divisions; apparently, you consider it normal for yourself if you are trying to convince me.

Zakharkin · I am taking steps to carry out your task as best as possible, I would also like to speed up the offensive with

in order to quickly break through the enemy, go to the area indicated by you.

Zhukov . To want a little, one must demand and act decisively; against those who like to stagnate, use the power granted to you, punishing the guilty and encouraging all those who have distinguished themselves on the battlefield. But you don't do this, although you don't skimp on promises at all ... Tell Zakharov that if he quickly overturns the enemy with a division and drives him across the Ugra River, then we will make his division guards; will you be able to move forward now with all your assets in order to move the division forward, without forgetting the prosecutor's office and the special department? All.

Zakharkin . The entire headquarters, together with me, employees of the special department, the prosecutor's office, are at the checkpoint, one kilometer southwest of Denisovo; heads of departments, as a rule, with divisions of the main direction and with regiments of the first echelon. Personally, he and the chief of staff alternately leave for the divisions of the shock group. My asset is the management of the army in divisions and regiments; I will take measures to strengthen with a large staff, including from the prosecutor's office and a special department in order to take all measures and break through the 133rd division across the Ressa River along the Vyazemsky Bolshak. All? You say that employees of the

Zhukov . special department and the prosecutor's office are with you at the checkpoint, and I demand to go down to the regiments, and this is a difference that you should understand right away. I demand that we go ahead and, during the first half of tomorrow, capture Maryino, Polyaki, Nizhne-Andreevskoye and go out onto the highway to the Klimov Zavod area; execution to convey to me, a copy to Comrade Stalin. This is a personal demand of Comrade Stalin. Provide a list of those who distinguished themselves in battles; we will give the award by telegraph; can you follow Comrade Stalin's instructions? I have no right not to comply and will take all measures to ensure that this instruction is carried out. Everything..."²⁹²

Zakharkin . March 7: "At Zhukov's apparatus. Hello, please let me know how you are doing.

order of the military council?

At the Zakharkin apparatus. Hello. I report. During yesterday's night and today, a tense battle was waged on the entire front of the army. The enemy, stubbornly defending on the river. Ugra and Ressa, in some areas turned into counterattacks. Especially stubbornly defended by the enemy and used counterattacks on the river. Ressa; on the Vyazemsky Bolshak during the day against 133 and 238 divisions made four counterattacks. By this time, the army units occupy the following position ...

Zhukov . Where are your tanks? Why are you slowly advancing with the army, not following orders, who is punished for this? . The

Zakharkin tanks haven't arrived yet. .

...Zhukov Where are the six tanks I sent you? What, you don't have fire? You are given inclusive up to heavy artillery. . Artillery is used very widely,

Zakharkin including heavy ones, and heavy losses are inflicted on the enemy, but still the enemy has large firepower, which delays and slows down our

²⁹² Ibid. pp. 135–136.

offensive. In addition, the divisions are very small in number. Yesterday, the replenishment arrived, which is already being put into operation today.

Zhukov . In vain do you think that successes are achieved by human flesh, successes are achieved by the art of warfare, they fight with skill, and not with people's lives. You give the enemy all the time the opportunity to stop and prepare for battle, and then, when the enemy organizes, you begin to attack, and hence all the qualities of your actions I am compelled to warn you most rigorously that we cannot tolerate such deeds that

are happening, especially since orders are not being carried out. I have the impression that my demand has not reached you if you have not yet understood that it is necessary to defeat the enemy at all costs; it would be nice in this case to report to you personally to the Military Council. Unfortunately, we cannot break away, maybe you can come to talk in detail or we can do without talking, what is your opinion?

Zakharkin . I would ask for two more days. I believe and hope that a strike by two right-flank divisions will give me the opportunity to smash the resisting enemy group in the Maryino area. In addition, on the right flank there is a hope of capturing Rusinovo and Pavlovo, which will allow me to reach the Vyazemsky Bolshak. I report that the divisions are engaged in a very tense battle and are acting very energetically, but the enemy is still holding strong, mainly using heavy mining and mortar batteries, and at this line the divisions have to advance on virgin soil, in deep snow, wooded terrain and drag artillery in their arms. We suffer heavy losses from mined fields. Hundreds of mines are scattered on and off the roads. So, for example, 360 mines were confiscated from the Prechisty to Emelyanovka, that is, at a distance of two kilometers on this road. This slows down the pace of our advance. I would also like to come to you and report personally, but now I ask for a delay in order to carry out the measures I have planned on the left flank, as well as on the right-flank group. I have many questions to report to you and receive your instructions. All.

...Zhukov . Press forward quickly, tomorrow, at all costs, get out on the Yukhnov-Vyazma road ... "293 And from under Vyazma

they literally beg for help: "Comrade. Zhukov, Khokhlov

03/10/1942 Being near

Vyazma on

your order, I could not cover the rear in any way, which you perfectly understand; the composition of the divisions was known to you before reaching Vyazma, and the stretching of communications of the 33rd Army was also known. Understand, we have been

fighting every day for a month and a half with almost no ammunition and have destroyed several thousand Germans. We ourselves have three thousand wounded. We are at war...

Hurry up to give ammunition, we have no ammunition.

Efremov.294

293 Ibid. pp. 136–138.

294 Op. Quoted from: Krasnov V.G. Unknown Zhukov. S. 320.

Stalin, despite the unsuccessful actions of the troops of the Kalinin and Western fronts, on March 20 again demanded to defeat the Rzhev-Vyazma-Gzhatskaya enemy grouping and join with the encircled troops of the 33rd Army and the group of General P. A. Belov.

And again, Zhukov, in the literal sense of the word, has to drive troops to operation. The next order to the commanders is issued on March 22:

"The Headquarters of the Supreme High Command indicates that the liquidation of the enemy's Rzhev-Gzhatsk-Vyazma grouping has been delayed. 1st Guards the cavalry corps, the western grouping of the 33rd army and the 4th airborne corps (airborne corps. - V.D.) continue to remain isolated from all rears and other armies of the front.

Headquarters **ordered** : 1. Defeat the

Rzhev-Vyazma-

Gzhatskaya enemy grouping and, no later than April 20, go out and gain a foothold on our defensive line along the Bely, Gulyashevo (Bulashevo. - V.D.), Dorogobuzh, Yelnya, Snopot, Krasnoe line. 2. The immediate task of the Western Front is by the joint efforts of the 43rd,

49th and 50th armies no later than 27.3 to clear the enemy of the supply routes of the 33rd army and the Belov group, connect with them and further destroy the enemy grouping in the area of Ralyaki, Milyatino, Vyazma.

On the right - the 5th Army completes the breakthrough sowing. - east. Gzhatsk with the task of capturing Gzhatsk no later than April 1, after which, by attacking Vyazma, assist the 33rd, 43rd, 49th and 50th armies in destroying the enemy near Vyazma. On the left, the 10th Army, actively defending itself, secures the flank of the 50th Army in the direction of Roslavl..."²⁹⁵ On March 23, Zhukov

gives appropriate instructions to Generals Efremov and Belov: "...2. By order of the Stavka, the front takes

decisive measures to clear the rear routes of the Efremov, Kornev, Belov and 4th airborne troops from the enemy. Actions will start on 25.3. 3. Prior to the connection of the 43rd Army with the Efremov group and the

50th Army with Belov, Efremov needs to organize defensive actions in such a way as to prevent the surrender of the occupied territory in any case and prevent the group from narrowing the area of operations. To speed up the clearing of the rear (from the enemy), Comrade Efremov to allocate part of the group's forces to help the 160th Rifle Division, which was tasked with capturing Abramovo and advancing in the direction of Dolzhenka, towards the 43rd Army. Start the offensive in the morning of 25.3. 4. Tov. Belov, at the expense of the Zhabot detachment and the allocation of one cavalry regiment,

reinforced with artillery and mortars, to form a detachment under the command of the deputy commander of the 2nd Guards. cd to assist Efremov. By the end of March 24, concentrate the detachment in the area west of Znamenka, from where, depending on the situation, strike in the general direction to Sizovo, where to connect with Efremov ...

"²⁹⁶

According to the response report of General Efremov to the Military Council of the Western Front, it is clear how exhausted the forces of his people are, how dramatic the position of the general himself is: "Comrade. Zhukov, Khokhlov

²⁹⁵ Op. Quoted from: G.K. Zhukov in the Battle of Moscow. Collection of documents. pp. 143–145.

²⁹⁶ Op. Quoted from: Krasnov V.G. Unknown Zhukov. pp. 319–320.

03/25/1942 1.

If you would have given our group in the next few days a landing of armed replacements, we, of course, will not only clear communications, but could already advance on Vyazma in the first days of April. 2. The whole situation: ours, the 43rd Army, Belova, Zhabot.

VDC will change.

Let's beat the enemy, it's great to beat!

3. At present, the group is exhausted, the mortality and morbidity due to the exhaustion of people is increasing. 4. We need to

strengthen ourselves before it's too late. 5. The appearance of tanks in the enemy, without our having them, will disorganize our defense, despite the courage of our people. Enemy tanks break through our defenses with infantry with a large number of fire weapons. 6. I ask for the replenishment of the group by landing as soon as possible. 7.

The troops are already getting wet boots. You need leather shoes.

Efremov Vladimirov Samsonov."297

But what can the command of the Western Front answer to General Efremov? In connection with the resumption of the offensive of the troops of the left wing of the Western Front on March 25-26, Zhukov demands that the troops encircled near Vyazma intensify operations on the rear communications of the enemy. However, the next offensive was again unsuccessful. On March 31, a decision is made to concentrate the efforts of the 49th and 43rd armies

on the deblockade of the encircled group of troops of Generals Efremov and Belov:

"In view of the complete ineffectiveness of the attacks in the center of the army, the attack should be stopped. Regroup the 2nd, 217th, 238th rifle divisions and the 34th rifle brigade to the Pavlovo, Rusinovo sector and, with the help of three rifle divisions, one rifle brigade, destroy the enemy in the area of Rusinovo, Pavlovo, Stenenki, after which this strike group develop offensive in the direction of Slobodka, Dobraya, interacting with the 43rd Army, which, with its left-flank strike force, strikes in the direction of Shumikhin.²⁹⁸ However, these attempts also did not provide a way out of the encirclement

formations of the 33rd Army and the group of General Belov with paratroopers.

On the situation of the group of troops of Generals Efremov and Belov, Zhukov informed Stalin on April 11 as follows: "...2. 33rd Army. Parts of the Efremov group, organizing defense in the Kuznetsovka, Vysokoye (on the eastern bank of the Ugra River), forest. east Zholobovo, Fedotkovo, fought a heavy battle with the advancing infantry and enemy tanks. On the night of 12.4 hours, ammunition and food are dropped on parts of the group. The position of the units of the eastern group is unchanged ... 7. The position of the units of the group of General Belov, 20th and 10th armies is unchanged. The enemy on these

²⁹⁷ Ibid. S. 320.

²⁹⁸ Op. Quoted from: Krasnov V. G. Unknown Zhukov. pp. 321–322.

did not show activity on the fronts.”²⁹⁹ At the same time, Georgy Konstantinovich gave the last directive to ensure the exit from the encirclement of the group of troops of Efremov. However, this order, like all others, was clearly unrealistic, and none of the army commanders complied with it.

From the evening of April 13, communication with Efremov ceased. And a little earlier, on April 9, from the territory occupied by the encircled units and divisions of the 33rd Army, the last plane flew to the mainland. According to the testimony of the chief of staff of the 33rd Army, Colonel S.I. Kinosyan, Zhukov demanded that Efremov fly over the front line on this plane: “Commander M.G. Efremov opened the package in front of everyone and read aloud the note delivered by the pilot. Looking at the haggard faces of the fighters, he loudly said: “I came with the soldiers and will return with them!””Efremov sent Kinosyan by this plane instead of himself. The left-flank 50th Army of the Western Front, which was supposed to link up with the group of troops of General Belov and the 4th Airborne Corps, did not fulfill its task either. On April 15, Zhukov summoned the commander of the 50th Army, General I.V. Boldin, to a direct wire and demanded to report “why the hitch happened.” Boldin tried to explain that the enemy was conducting strong artillery and mortar fire, constantly counterattacking with tanks, pulling up reserves, and the army troops were short of ammunition, fuel, and food. This was true, but the front commander was not satisfied with such explanations:

“Out of the 15 formations that you have, today and yesterday only three divisions were actively fighting, and 10 acted passively, defended. Of the 13 riflemen, only five are fighting, the rest are standing still. Tank brigades were inactive today, I don’t understand what kind of tactics this is. The enemy is chasing you with 7 tanks, you have 100 tanks, that is,

fourteen times more, what kind of tactics is this. You, apparently, read the report of the commander of the 10th Motorized Division, how he fought off the advance of your seven divisions with one regiment all the time, such behavior only discredits the Red Army. How can you put up with such facts that discredit the Red Army? You have been complaining all the time about the lack of tanks, now you have dozens of times more than the enemy, but the results are the same: the discrediting of the Red Army. It is not clear why you learn about waste when it has already happened. This means that you do not lead the battle, you do not have organized control, you do not have your own eyes on the front lines, which means that the army operates without a rudder and sails ... The enemy has four divisions and with them maneuvers against your 15 formations as he wants. He plays with you like a cat with a mouse. Why don't you learn and teach commanders the art of tactics from the enemy? Keep in mind that this is not shameful, our ancestors always learned from the enemies, and then beat them, their teachers ... In short, you must strictly remember our last agreement, I reported on it, I think that I acted softly, but I assured , that if it happens again, it will be issued in the square. Now convey my demands to all who should, and arrange for the execution

²⁹⁹ Cit. Quoted from: G.K. Zhukov in the Battle of Moscow. Collection of documents. S. 149.

instructions ...

"300 And the enemy, having concentrated large forces, began to eliminate the dangerous "splinter" - the troops of the 33rd Army and the group of General Belov surrounded near Vyazma. On the offer to surrender, the enemy was refused, and on the night of April 14, General Efremov began a breakthrough to connect with the troops of the Western Front. The troops moving through the spring thaw and under continuous enemy attacks had to disperse into separate groups and detachments, which made their way on their own. M.G. Efremov himself was seriously wounded and, not wanting to be captured, shot himself. Few managed to escape from the deadly ring. Zhukov did not yet know about this when he reported to Stalin on April 18: "... the 33rd Army. The position of the parts of the eastern group is unchanged. Two groups of

77 soldiers and commanders from the 113th and 160th rifle divisions entered the zone of the 43rd Army. According to the report of Major Tretyakov, head of the artillery supply of the 160th Infantry Division, a detachment of 2,000 men, led by General Efremov, moved on 16.4 fighting from the Peskov area in the direction of Mal. Viselovo. According to the report of the commanders who left on the front of the 43rd Army, and air reconnaissance data, the main forces of the Efremov group on the night of 18.4 were presumably in the forests northeast and east of Mal. Boslavka. The data is verified by aerial reconnaissance. ... 43rd Army. On the front Gorodets, Red October, a stubborn battle continues. The enemy continues to put up strong resistance. In order to complete the breakthrough of the enemy's defense and connect with units of the Efremov group moving in

the direction of Mal. Viselovo, army troops went on the offensive at 21.00 18.4 In the position of parts of the group of General Belov for 18.4 essential

no change has taken place.

Parts of the 4th Airborne Corps by the morning of 18.4 captured Buda (6 km northeast of Milyatino). On the night of 19.4, units of the corps attacked Askerovo..."301 Many years later,

G.K. Zhukov assessed the events that took place near Vyazma as follows: .G. Efremov, the front command allowed them to withdraw troops to join our main forces. At the same time, it was strictly ordered to leave the Vyazma region through partisan areas, through forests, in the general direction to Kirov, where the 10th Army would prepare to break through the enemy's defenses, since it was weaker there.

The cavalry corps of General P.A. Belov and the airborne units exactly followed the order and, having made a long horseshoe-shaped path, reached the site of the 10th Army on July 18, 1942 ... Lieutenant General M.G. Efremov, believing that the path to Kirov is too long for his weary group, he turned by radio directly to the General Staff with a request to allow him to break through the shortest path - across the Ufa River. I.V. Stalin immediately called me and asked if I agreed

300 Ibid. pp. 152–153.

301 Ibid. S. 154.

I am with Efremov's proposal. I answered with a categorical refusal. But the Supreme Commander said that Efremov was an experienced army commander and that we must agree with him. The headquarters ordered to organize a counterattack by the forces of the front. Such a strike was prepared and carried out by the 43rd Army, but no action was taken by the group of General M.G. Efremov. As it turned out later, the Germans discovered the detachment while moving to the Ugra River and defeated it ... Critically evaluating these events of 1942 now, I believe that at that time we made a mistake in assessing the situation in the Vyazma region. We overestimated the capabilities of our troops and underestimated the enemy. The "nutlet" there turned out to be stronger than we expected ... "302

In 1988, the Kommunist magazine (No. 14) published Zhukov's earlier conversation with members of the editorial board of the Military Historical Journal and some military historians about the Moscow battle. To a remark from the spot: "Tell us about the fading operations of Efremov and Belov," Zhukov allegedly answered this way: "The troops of Efremov and Belov did not actually conduct any special operation. They broke through the existing gaps in the enemy's defenses and then acted together with the partisans in his rear. Their attempts to attack Vyazma were not successful, because they did not have heavy artillery and there was an acute shortage of ammunition. Therefore, the troops of the front, operating in the Vyazma region, switched to the position of partisan detachments ... So there can be no talk of "fading" the operation here, they simply did not have the opportunity to conduct such an operation. The zone of action of the troops of the front in the winter of 1942 extended for 600 kilometers, and, of course, it was very difficult to keep track of the actions of the tactical order ... Efremov, with part of the

army's forces, went into a free "hole". Behind him were the main forces of the army. I could not keep track of what he left behind to secure the flanks in Ufa, and, for your information, he left a detachment of 90 people - no tanks, no guns, with light means. Do I share responsibility for Efremov? Well, of course, I am responsible for all the troops, but not for such actions that I do not organize. What was Efremov supposed to do? At the expense of the main forces of the army, which were delayed at the Shan Plant, he had to put a couple of divisions like struts, so that his rear would be provided. He didn't. Well, everyone's hats were on one side then, and I underestimated the state of the enemy's Vyazma grouping ... "

K.K. Rokossovsky in 1962 in an interview with teachers and students of the Military Academy. M.V. Frunze assessed the course of the counteroffensive near Moscow very critically: "On December 20, after the liberation of Volokolamsk, it became clear that the enemy had recovered, organized the defense and that it was impossible to continue the offensive with available forces. It was necessary to seriously prepare for the summer campaign. But, to our great regret, the Headquarters was ordered to continue the offensive and wear down the enemy. It was a gross mistake. We exhausted ourselves. Zhukov did not take into account repeated reports of losses. It was impossible to achieve decisive results with the available forces. We just pushed the enemy. There were not enough guns, tanks, especially

ammunition. The infantry advanced through the snow under heavy fire with weak artillery support. There were five fronts, and, naturally, there were not enough forces. The enemy went over to the strategic defense, and we had to do the same. And we were advancing. This was Stalin's grossest mistake. Zhukov and Konev could not convince him."

There is a contradiction in the assessments of Konstantin Konstantinovich. On the one hand, he blames Zhukov for not taking losses into account. But at the same time, the illustrious marshal knew perfectly well, whose mistake was the unprepared offensive launched on a wide front. Recall that at the same time, Zhukov was the only one among the military leaders who, in early January 1942, tried to object to Stalin, considering it impossible to lead troops to the west without creating the necessary reserves. He objected at the moment when, as it turned out, everything had already been decided. And the fate of those who plentifully watered every reclaimed inch of land with their blood, who could not escape from the deadly grip near Vyazma, was sealed. Rokossovsky also understood perfectly well that Zhukov, giving orders to his subordinates, was forced to follow the directives of the Headquarters in the same way that Rokossovsky had to fulfill his, Zhukov's, orders. Perform even in cases where they led to irreparable consequences. We will not guess whether Colonel of the General Staff K.V. Vasilchenko understood this simple logic when, in hot pursuit, in May 1942, he compiled a description of the

operation of the 33rd and 43rd armies in the Vyazma direction. But the fact that the colonel tried to thoroughly clean the uniforms of the Headquarters and the General Staff, diligently removing all stains, is beyond doubt. He wrote: "The operational plan of the operation for the sudden capture of the city of Vyazma, reaching the rear of the Gzhatsko-Vyazma grouping of the enemy, separating the Vyazma grouping from the Yukhnovskaya group and simultaneously defeating them in parts did not correspond to the availability of forces and means allocated for this purpose by the Western Front.

An incorrect assessment of the enemy's combat readiness after serious defeats inflicted on him in previous battles, incorrect timing and ignoring the conditions in which our troops operated led to an incorrect decision, as a result of which the planned operation was not carried out. If the Western Front had first attacked the Yukhnov group with its entire left wing (33, 43, 49, 50 and Count Belov), surrounded it and destroyed it, which, according to the conditions of the situation, provided a full opportunity, and then, together with the right wing, in cooperation with The Kalinin Front could liquidate the Sychevsko-Gzhatsko-Vyazma grouping of the enemy (so in the text. - V.D.). But instead, the Western Front prematurely pursued large targets, wanted to simultaneously defeat the Gzhatsk-Vyazma, Yukhnov, Spas-Demen, Myatlev groupings of the enemy,

without having sufficient forces and means for this. The actions of the Western Front were likened to action with spread fingers... The armies, accustomed to acting independently, without linking their actions with their neighbors, continued to remain true to their old principles. It turned out like this: when the strike force of one army advances, then the other one stood still, then they changed

roles. And the command of the Western Front continued to observe how the shock groups of the two armies were fighting side by side, and did not interfere in

their affairs until the operation in this direction was finally thwarted. The Western Front did not create a

kulak in the form of a large powerful grouping from all branches of the military in a decisive sector, with the help of which it would solve the problem of a large operational scope.

Forces and means were almost evenly distributed along the entire vast front. The loud orders given by the commander of the Western Front were impossible to carry out. Not a single order for the entire operation was carried out on time by the troops. They remained bare unnecessary paper, which did not reflect the actual position of the troops and did not represent a valuable operational document. And the haste that the command of the Western Front showed was transferred to the troops and brought great harm to the cause ... The Western grouping of the 33rd Army fought honestly and valiantly until the end of its existence. With a

shortage of ammunition and food, she fought for 2.5 months in complete isolation from her troops, inflicting great damage in manpower to the enemy and fettering his large forces with her actions.

When the enemy split the western grouping of the 33rd army into parts and went to the eastern bank of the river. Ugra, on the one hand, the ineffectiveness of the battles of the 43rd and 49th armies to break through the defenses, on the other hand, the fate of the western group was clear ... Thanks to major shortcomings, primarily of an operational nature ... in the actions of the 43rd and 49th armies, the enemy avoided defeat in parts. It turned out to be a success instead of an operational scale - purely tactical - the displacement of the enemy's Myatlev grouping, the capture of Yukhnov and reaching the line of the rivers Vorya and Ugra. ", intending

to defeat Germany completely in the same year, 1942. It is difficult to argue with the statement that the operations carried out by the front command against the Gzhatsk-Vyazma and Yukhnovskaya enemy groups did not correspond to the "availability of forces and means." Just as other tasks of this period emanating from the Headquarters did not correspond to the capabilities of the Western Front: the encirclement and capture of the Rzhev-Sychev group, the defeat of the Bolkhov-Zhizdrinsk-Bryansk group, the liberation of Bryansk ...

And by no means Zhukov's miscalculations, but similar reasons caused the weak interaction of the armies and strikes in divergent directions. Let us recall how much attention Zhukov paid to the interaction of neighbors during the defense of Moscow and counterattacks in December 1941. Do not stand up to criticism and attempts to teach how to carry out offensive operations. After all, even without reserves, Zhukov was able to create a powerful fist from the 1st shock and 16th armies and deliver a crushing blow to the enemy's defensive lines on Lama. But after all, they took the 1st shock from him, did not allow him to develop success promising great strategic benefits, did not give him time even for an elementary regrouping of forces. We agree with one statement of the note of the General Staff

303 Op. Quoted from: Sokolov B. Unknown Zhukov: a portrait without retouching in the mirror of the era. pp. 346-349.

unconditionally: the western grouping of the 33rd Army fought honestly and valiantly until the end of its existence. Yes, a mistake was made in assessing the situation in the

Vyazma region, and Zhukov speaks about this directly. One might add: a tragic mistake. But there are no other mistakes in war. Eyewitnesses say that Georgy Konstantinovich liked to repeat: "In the war, calculation with a miscalculation go along the neighboring paths." He probably well understood that these paths would inevitably intersect in his fate. It is a pity that those who later covered the image of the commander with tinsel did not understand this, jealously protecting their decoration from scratches and cracks. The real Zhukov paid no attention to such trifles. Assessing the results of the most difficult period of the war, G.K. Zhukov in his "Memoirs and Reflections" noted:

the battle near Moscow was "In the marked the beginning of a sharp turn in near Moscow, war ... The defeat of the German troops announced to the whole world a "blitzkrieg" from the the collapse of Hitler's plans in a relationship fascist troops, by the Soviet Union, the beginning of the defeat of the German invincibility of the Soviet state ".304

The official history of the Great Patriotic War considers that the general offensive of the Red Army, taking into account unfavorable factors, ended with "certain success."

If on the battlefields for Moscow the German troops lost more than 500 thousand soldiers and officers, the losses of the Soviet troops amounted to: irretrievable - almost 937 thousand people, sanitary - about 899 thousand. In general, the inconsistency in the assessments of the results of the Moscow battle, which caused such terrible losses and ended in a tragedy near Vyazma, is quite understandable. However, one cannot understand those who forget what position the Soviet troops were in when, in October 1941, Zhukov led the defense of the western borders of the capital. And if until quite recently the Germans viewed Moscow through binoculars, now they were forced to burrow deep into the ground at lines separated from it at a distance that they would no longer be able to overcome. ... Stalin, convinced that a further offensive would not lead to the expected result, was forced to accept the proposal of the command of the troops of the western direction to go on the defensive. On April 20, Zhukov sent an appropriate order to the army, demanding that "the period of spring thaw be used to the maximum to bring units and formations into defensive lines, equipping units and formations with weapons,

training them and putting them together in combat, separating and bringing front-line and army reserves into full order, organizing front-line and army rear services, repair of weapons and military equipment and rest of the troops.

complete

state

occupied

Relative calm has been established in the western direction.

Chapter XI. Volga - Russian river

You could at least catch your breath a little. In May, the front headquarters moved from Perkhushkov to Obninskoye, and here, some hundred meters from a two-story building covered with camouflage nets,

flowed his native Protva. In the mornings, Georgy Konstantinovich went down the narrow path to the shore in order to breathe cool and clean air for a few minutes, to collect his thoughts. Positional warfare was going on on the Western Front. But alarming news came

from other directions. The offensive operation of the North-Western Front near Demyansk ended in vain. At first, they failed to liquidate the encircled German grouping, then part of our troops themselves ended up in the "cauldron" near Lyuban. It was not possible to break the blockade of Leningrad. Literally every day worsened the situation in the south. Having defeated the Soviet troops in the Crimea and near Kharkov, the enemy completely took the strategic initiative into his own hands and rapidly moved towards the Volga and the Caucasus. An oppressive atmosphere reigned. In Zhukov's inner circle, the mood deteriorated sharply: Georgy Konstantinovich again walked black as clouds, became nervous and sometimes "broke down" on his subordinates.

... The failure of the lightning war plan, the failures of the first military winter, did not discourage Hitler. On April 5, 1942, the Fuhrer signed Directive No. 41, which provided for "finally destroying the forces still at the disposal of the Soviets and depriving them, as far as possible, of the most important military and economic centers." To this end, it was planned, "maintaining the position in the central sector", that is, in the Moscow direction, to capture Leningrad in the north and establish contact by land with the Finnish army, and to make a breakthrough to the Caucasus on the southern wing of the front. The main efforts of the German troops were mainly focused on carrying out an operation involving the defeat of the Red Army troops west of the Don, the capture of the oil-bearing regions of the Caucasus and the transition through its ridge. And only after achieving this goal, it was planned, finally surrounded Leningrad, to seize the territories to the east and west of it.

On April 11, at a meeting with the command of the Wehrmacht Ground Forces, Hitler instructed to prepare the documents necessary for the implementation of Operation Blau (the code name for the summer offensive plan on the southern sector of the Eastern Front). In order to hide the direction of the main attack in the summer campaign, the headquarters of Army

Group Center, at the direction of the Wehrmacht leadership, developed a disinformation operation code-named Kremlin. To this end, an order was prepared, and on May 29, an order was signed to attack Moscow: "To defeat the enemy troops located in the area west and south of the enemy's capital, to firmly seize the territory around Moscow, surrounding the city, and thereby deprive the enemy of the possibility of operational use of this area".³⁰⁵ The order, which was, as it were, top secret, was issued in 22 copies, while other orders were drawn up in 10-16 copies. Naturally, its contents became known to the Soviet command - this was taken care of. For greater credibility, according to the plan of Operation "Kremlin", measures were taken that simulated the preparation of an offensive in Army Group Center. An aerial photograph of the Moscow defensive

³⁰⁵ Op. Quoted from: Dashichev V.I. Bankruptcy strategy of German fascism: East. essays, documents and materials. In 2 vols. T. 2. S. 312.

positions, radio disinformation was carried out, plans for the capital and large cities were multiplied, and troops were regrouped. All this was supposed to help the General Staff of the Red Army to believe that the main events in the summer of 1942 would unfold in the Moscow direction.

Soviet intelligence was also on the alert. The report of the Main Intelligence Directorate of the Red Army dated March 18, 1942 noted that "the center of gravity of the spring offensive will be shifted to the southern sector of the front with an auxiliary strike in the north while simultaneously demonstrating on the central front against Moscow ... For the spring offensive, Germany, together with the allies, will put up to 65 new divisions... The most probable date for the offensive is mid-April or early May."³⁰⁶

The same conclusion was confirmed by information received five days later by the State Defense Committee from the state security agencies: "The main blow will be delivered in the southern sector with the task of breaking through Rostov to Stalingrad and the North Caucasus, and from there towards the Caspian Sea. By this the Germans hope to reach the sources of Caucasian oil. In the event of a successful operation with access to the Volga near Stalingrad, the Germans planned to launch an offensive north along the Volga ... and undertake the main operations against Moscow and Leningrad, since their capture is a matter of prestige for the German command."³⁰⁷ At the end of March, a meeting of the State Defense Committee was held, which considered the plan of operation

presented by the command of the southwestern direction (commander-in-chief Marshal S.K. Timoshenko, member of the military council N.S. Khrushchev, chief of staff General I.Kh. Bagramyan). Stalin considered it necessary to launch a series of preemptive strikes on a broad front and test the readiness of the enemy. His point of view inspired Marshal Timoshenko, who confidently stated that the troops of the South-Western direction are now able and, of course, should launch a preemptive strike in order to thwart the offensive plans of the Germans against the Southern and South-Western fronts. The same opinion was shared by Voroshilov, who believed that there were enough troops in the south to crush the enemy. Shaposhnikov's doubts were not taken into account.

The Supreme Commander ordered the strategic operation proposed by the Military Council of the southwestern direction to be rescheduled into a private one. However, the fact that I.Kh. Bagramyan informs us about this new operation, already developed according to Stalin's instructions, makes us doubt its private nature. This is how the goal of the Kharkov operation was formulated in the plan for April-May, approved by the Headquarters on March 30, 1942: capture Dnepropetrovsk and Sinelnikovo and thereby deprive the enemy of the most important crossing over the river. Dnieper and Sinelnikovo railway junction. Marshal of the Soviet Union K. S. Moskalenko, who commanded at that time

³⁰⁶ Op. Quoted from: Krasnov V.G. Unknown Zhukov. S. 336.

³⁰⁷ Ibid. pp. 336–337.

38th Army, recalled how at the end of March, at a meeting with army commanders, Bagramyan said that "our troops have great advantages and therefore must preempt the intentions of the opposing enemy, defeat his forces and reach the line of the middle reaches of the Dnieper River." Thus, both according to the original and the final plan, the Southwestern Front was to not only capture Kharkov, but also reach the middle reaches of the Dnieper, defeating the 6th Army of Army Group South. In the directive of the headquarters of the Southwestern Front, the Kharkov operation was called "an operation for the complete and final liberation of Soviet Ukraine from the Nazi invaders."

The plan for the summer campaign also provided for the conduct of a strong and at the same time active defense on the front from Murmansk to Lake Ladoga. It was planned to eliminate the enemy's Demyansk grouping, and then (simultaneously with the offensive on Orel and Kharkov) by the forces of the Kalinin and Western Fronts and part of the troops of the North-Western Front, defeat the Rzhev-Vyazma-Gzhatsk group. After that, it was supposed to carry out an operation to defeat the Luban-Chudov group of Germans and de-blockade Leningrad (at the same time, in the south, to liberate the Donbass).

It was planned to inflict a powerful counter (or even preemptive) strike on the main enemy forces in the center, followed by an offensive along the entire front. At the same time, it was planned to concentrate the main efforts on two sections: Dvinsk, Minsk and from Dnepropetrovsk - Kyiv, Zhmerinka. This made it possible to create conditions for the envelopment and subsequent defeat of the entire central enemy grouping.

Thus, an offensive was planned on almost the entire Soviet-German front, that is, something similar to what the Red Army had already tried to carry out in January-April. Stalin once again overestimated the strength of the Red Army and underestimated the enemy. This time the sobering up came quickly. Describing the intentions of the Headquarters and the General Staff,

Zhukov later wrote: "Basically, I agreed with the operational strategic forecasts of the Supreme Commander, but could not agree with him regarding the number of planned private offensive operations of our troops, believing that they would absorb our reserves without much benefit and this will complicate the preparation for a general offensive ... "308

Insisting on delivering powerful strikes in the western strategic direction in order to defeat the Vyazma-Rzhev grouping of the enemy with the forces of the Western, Kalinin and nearby fronts, Georgy Konstantinovich believed that "the defeat of the enemy in the western direction should have seriously weakened the German forces and forced them to abandon major offensive operations at least for the near future." And he further admits: "Of course, now, with a retrospective assessment of events, this conclusion no longer seems so indisputable to me, but at that time, in the absence of complete data on the enemy, I was sure that I was right."309

308 Zhukov G.K. Memories and reflections. T. 2. S. 276.

309 Ibid. S. 277.

In May, almost at the same time, fierce battles unfolded near Leningrad and Demyansk, in the Crimea and near Kharkov. The troops of the Northwestern Front failed to succeed, and as a result, the enemy held his defensive positions in this direction until the spring of 1943. In the south, the Crimean Front suffered a crushing defeat, as a result of which the Crimean Peninsula was surrendered to the enemy in early July 1942.

On May 17, German troops, trying to disrupt the offensive on Kharkov, launched powerful counterattacks on the right wing of the Southern Front and forced it to begin retreat to the north and northeast. In two days, the enemy advanced 50 kilometers and went to the flank of the Southwestern Front, threatening its rear. The General Staff spoke in favor of stopping the offensive in the Kharkov direction and using the main forces of the front to eliminate the threat of encirclement. Despite this, Stalin still demanded that the front command fulfill the original task. As a result, the troops of the 6th and 57th armies were surrounded. It was another disaster in the Red Army: the Southern and Southwestern fronts lost over 277 thousand

Human.

The entire plan of the Supreme High Command to develop the success of the winter campaign failed in a short time. The troops lost a number of important areas and bridgeheads, and a significant part of the reserves of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command, intended for the summer offensive, was mediocrally spent. The culprits, as always, were mainly those who carried out the orders of the Headquarters. For the defeat of the Crimean Front, the commander of the front, General D.T. Kozlov, a member of the military council, divisional commissar F.A. Shamanin, the commanders of the 44th and 47th armies, generals S.I. Chernyakov and K. S. Kolganov, commander of the aviation of the front, General B.M. Nikolaenko. The chief of staff of the front, General P.P. Vechny, was removed from his post and sent to the disposal of the General Staff. This time, L. Z. Mekhlis, who was removed from the post of deputy people's commissar of defense and head of the Main Political Directorate of the Red Army, did not escape the wrath of his main patron and was demoted to the rank of corps commissar. As a representative of the Headquarters, in the Crimea, he sought to resolve many issues on his own, replacing the command of the Crimean Front.

The defeat near Kharkov so stunned Stalin that on June 26 he sent a rather emotional message, not without epistolary merit, to the military council of the Southwestern Front: operation, but still managed to give the enemy 18-20 divisions ... This catastrophe, which in its disastrous results is tantamount to a disaster with Rennenkampf and Samsonov in East Prussia (commanders of the 1st and 2nd Russian armies that were defeated during the East Prussian operation North-Western Front in August-September 1914. - V.D.) ... "Stalin accused all members of the Military Council of mistakes, and above all the front commander Marshal S.K. Timoshenko and Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party (b) of Ukraine N.S. Khrushchev. "If we informed the country in its entirety about the catastrophe that the front survived and continues to

worry, then I'm afraid that you would have been treated very cool ... "

One can imagine with what difficulty, using all the remaining reserves. The Stavka had to restore the strategic front in the south, deploying the Voronezh and Stalingrad fronts in July.

The impressive successes of the German troops in the Crimea and near Kharkov created a mortal threat to the entire Red Army, to the entire country.

On July 28, Stalin, in his capacity as People's Commissar of Defense, signed Order No. 227. cities

and villages, rapes, robs and kills the Soviet population. Fighting is going on in the Voronezh region, on the Don, in the south and at the gates of the North Caucasus. The German invaders are rushing towards Stalingrad, towards the Volga and want to seize the Kuban, the North Caucasus with their oil and grain wealth at any cost. The enemy has already captured Voroshilovgrad, Starobelsk, Rossosh, Kupyansk, Valuiki, Novochoerkassk, Rostov-on-Don, half of Voronezh. Parts of the troops of the Southern Front, following the alarmists, left Rostov and Novochoerkassk without serious resistance and without orders from Moscow, covering their banners with disgrace. The population of our country, which treats the Red Army with love and respect, is beginning to become disillusioned with it, losing faith in the Red Army. And many curse the Red Army because it gives our people under the yoke of German oppressors, while it itself flees to the east.

... We have lost more than 70 million people, more than 800 million poods of grain a year and more than 10 million tons of metal a year. We no longer have superiority over the Germans either in manpower or in grain supplies. To retreat further means to ruin ourselves and at the same time ruin our Motherland. Each new patch of territory left by us will strengthen the enemy in every possible way and weaken our defense, our Motherland in every possible way ... It follows from this that it is time to end the retreat. No step back! This should be our main call

now... There is not enough order, discipline in companies, battalions, regiments, divisions, in tank units, in air squadrons. This is now our main shortcoming. We must establish the strictest order and iron discipline in our army if we want to save the situation and defend the Motherland. ... Alarmists and cowards must be exterminated on the spot. From now on, every commander, Red Army soldier, and political worker must have an iron law: not a single step back without an order from the high command.

The commanders of a company, battalion, regiment, division, the corresponding commissars and political workers, retreating from a combat position without an order from above, are traitors to the Motherland. It is necessary to deal with such commanders and political workers as with traitors to the Motherland ... The Supreme High

Command of the Red Army orders: 1. The military councils of the fronts and, above all, the front commanders: we can and must allegedly retreat further to the east, that there will be no such retreat

alleged harm;

b) unconditionally remove from their posts and send them to Headquarters to bring to court martial the commanders of the armies who allowed the unauthorized withdrawal of troops from their positions, without an order from the front command; c) to form within the front from one to three

(depending on the situation) penal battalions (800 people each), where to send medium and senior commanders and relevant political workers of all branches of the military who are guilty of violating discipline due to cowardice or instability, and put them on more difficult sections of the front, to give them the opportunity to atone for their crimes against the Motherland.

2. The military councils of the armies and, above all, the commanders of the armies: a) unconditionally remove from their posts the commanders and commissars of corps and divisions who allowed unauthorized withdrawal of troops from their positions without an order from the army command, and send them to the military council of the front to be brought before a military court;

b) form within the army 3-5 well-armed barrage detachments (up to 200 people each), place them in the immediate rear of unstable divisions and oblige them, in case of panic and disorderly withdrawal of parts of the division, to shoot alarmists and cowards on the spot and thereby help honest fighters divisions to fulfill their duty to the Motherland;

c) to form within the army from five to ten (depending on the situation) penal companies (from 150 to 200 people each), where to send ordinary soldiers and junior commanders who are guilty of violating discipline due to cowardice or instability, and put them in difficult areas army to give them the opportunity to atone for their crimes against the Motherland with blood. 3. Commanders and commissars of corps and divisions: a) unconditionally remove from their posts

the commanders and commissars of regiments and battalions who allowed unauthorized withdrawal of units without an order from the corps or division commander, take away orders and medals from them and send them to the military councils of the front for military court;

b) provide all kinds of assistance and support to barrage army detachments in strengthening order and discipline in units.

Read the order in all companies, squadrons, batteries, squadrons, teams, headquarters.

People's Commissar of Defense I. Stalin."310 In the historical press, especially since the late 1980s, when this document was first published in full, many points of view have been expressed regarding Order No. 227, often directly opposed to each other. It should be noted that in the fifties, after the death of Stalin, Zhukov was indignant at the words that the population was "losing faith in the Red Army, and many of them cursed the Red Army because it was giving our people under the yoke of German oppressors, while she herself was fleeing to East". In his opinion, "this was done in order to ward off the guilt and anger of the people for the unpreparedness and mistakes made in the leadership of the troops from the Headquarters to the division, inclusive."

Much later, and up to the present day, such a position among

310 Op. Quoted from: Military Historical Journal. 1988. No. 8. S. 73-75.

historians and publicists has become perhaps the most common. More convenient if you like. Because it has become very convenient to view the war through the prism of the continuous mistakes of the Stalinist leadership and believe that the victory was won only in spite of the actions of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief, only thanks to the huge human resources thrown to death. Such an approach does not require a painstaking study of the sources, nor a painful analysis of the events and phenomena of that historical period.

Let us note that a few years later, while working on "Memoirs and Reflections" and more carefully comprehending the reasons for defeats and victories, Zhukov assesses the Stalin order already impartially and objectively: "This order introduced tough measures to combat alarmists and violators of discipline, strongly "moods. It said that an iron law for active troops should be the requirement "Not a step back!". The order was backed up by intensified party-political work." By the way, the removal of Mehlis and the appointment of A.S. Shcherbakov to the post of head of the Main Political Directorate of the Red Army influenced the improvement of political work in the Red

Army. In addition, in the summer of 1942, special mobilizations of communists and Komsomol members were carried out. Regardless of our attitude to this, the Communists in wartime played an important cementing role among the Red Army. After all, the order "Communists, forward!" - not an artistic invention of writers, but a reality, something that really often sounded on the battlefield. Two days after Stalin signed Order No. 227, Zhukov began the Rzhev-Sychevsk offensive operation. Obviously, overshadowed by the scale of the events taking place at that time on the southern fronts, this operation somehow fell out of the field of serious attention of military historians. Perhaps because it is not customary to consider it instructive. But in vain. And it is not for nothing that Zhukov devotes a large place to her in his memoirs.

The idea to strike powerful blows with the forces of the Western, Kalinin and nearby fronts and defeat the Vyazma-Rzhev grouping of the enemy came to Georgy Konstantinovich back in the spring, when Stalin was discussing the strategic tasks of the summer campaign. It formed the basis of the plan of the Rzhev-Sychevsk offensive operation, carried out on July 30 - August 23, 1942. The main goal was to strike the left wing of the Kalinin Front (29th, 30th Army, 3rd Air Army) and the right wing of the Western Front (20th, 31st Army, 1st Air Army) in in the general direction to Sychevsk, to defeat the main forces of the German 9th Army and eliminate the Rzhev ledge, from which the Germans opened one of the shortest routes to Moscow. The main role in the operation was to be played by the Western Front under the command of Zhukov.

On July 30, the 30th and 29th armies of the Kalinin Front went on the offensive, which, however, could not break through the enemy's defenses. The offensive of the troops of the Western Front began on August 4 after an hour and a half artillery preparation. They crossed the Derzha River, broke through the heavily fortified lines of the German troops, and by the end of the next day expanded the breakthrough to 30 kilometers along the front and

advanced up to 25 kilometers in depth. The success of the Soviet troops alarmed the Chief of the General Staff of the Wehrmacht Ground Forces, General F. Halder. On August 4, he noted in his military diary: "The enemy managed to achieve a deep breakthrough on the front of the 9th Army (it seems that seven divisions and one tank brigade are advancing with enhanced artillery support) in the direction of Zubtsov. Formations of the 39th Corps were thrown against them, consisting of the 5th, 2nd, 1st Panzer and 102nd divisions. On the front of the 9th Army near Rzhev, several major attacks were repulsed.³¹¹ On August 5, the Headquarters of the Supreme Command, trying to build on the success of the troops of the Western Front, subordinated to Zhukov all the troops, including the Kalinin Front, operating in the Rzhev area. The next day, intensifying the blow in the direction of Sychevsk, Zhukov brought into action a front-line mobile group consisting of the 6th and 8th tank and 2nd cavalry corps. This was a timely step, since the command of the Army Group Center reinforced the 9th Army with three tank and two infantry divisions and launched a counterattack in the general direction of Pogoreloye Gorodishche. Zhukov, trying to frustrate the enemy's intentions, struck his reserves with aircraft and aimed the main forces of the mobile group at them. As a result, on August 7, a major tank battle took place on the approaches to the Vazuza and Gzhat rivers, in which up to 1,500 tanks and self-propelled guns participated on both sides. On August 8, the 5th Army of the Western Front was introduced into the battle with the task of breaking through the enemy defenses to the entire tactical depth and linking up with the left-flank units of the 20th Army. The Soviet troops failed to achieve significant territorial successes. However, they thwarted the enemy's counterattack, inflicted a defeat on him and forced him to go on the defensive at the turn of the Vazuz and

Gzhat rivers, the village of Karmanovo. Subsequently, the troops of the right wing of the Western Front fought for the expansion of the bridgeheads captured on the left banks of the Vazuza and Gzhat and on the approaches to Karmanovo and Bykovo. Using the success of the Western Front, the troops of the 30th and 29th armies of the Kalinin Front in the second half of August reached the approaches to Rzhev, but could not capture it. On August 23, the 31st Army, with the help of the troops of the 29th Army, liberated Zubtsov, and the troops of the 20th Army - Karmanovo. On this, the offensive capabilities of our troops were exhausted, and they went on the defensive.

As a result of the Rzhev-Sychevsk operation, Soviet troops advanced 30-45 kilometers, liquidated the enemy bridgehead on the left bank of the Volga in the Rzhev region, pinned down the large forces of Army Group Center and forced the enemy to transfer 12 divisions to the area of operation from other sectors of the Soviet-German front. The German General K. Tippelskirch noted: "The breakthrough was prevented only by the fact that three tank and several infantry divisions, which were already preparing to be transferred to the southern front, were detained and introduced first to localize the breakthrough, and then to counterattack."³¹²

During fierce battles, 16 enemy divisions, according to the authors of the encyclopedia "The Great Patriotic War 1941-1945", lost 50-80 percent of their personnel, and in each of the tank divisions out of 150 -

³¹¹ Halder F. Military diary. 06/22/1941–09/24/1942. S. 617.

³¹² Tippelskirch K. History of the Second World War. M., 1956. S. 241.

160 combat vehicles remained no more than 20–

30.313 At the same time, Zhukov was sure: "If we had one or two armies at our disposal, it would be possible, in cooperation with the Kalinin Front, not only to defeat the Rzhev group, but also the entire Rzhev-Vyazma group of German troops and significantly improve the operational situation in the entire western strategic direction. Unfortunately, this real opportunity was missed by the Supreme High Command."³¹⁴ One can agree with this opinion, since there really were not enough forces to carry out the tasks assigned to the troops of the Western and Kalinin fronts. It should also be taken into account that in advance they had to deeply break through the created echeloned and heavily fortified defenses. Therefore, the losses of thousands of people involved in the operation were significant. Of the 345.1 thousand people involved in the operation, almost 51.5 thousand (14.9 percent) were irretrievably lost.³¹⁵ After the troops of the Western Front went on the defensive, Zhukov left for the area of the settlement of Pogoreloye Gorodishche to conduct a new offensive operation. Here, on August 27, he was caught by a call from Stalin, who ordered that the duties of the commander of the Western Front be assigned to the chief of staff and immediately go to Headquarters. As it turned out, on that day, by a decree of the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR, G.K. Zhukov was appointed first deputy people's commissar of defense (S.M. Budyonny was relieved of his duties as first deputy people's commissar). Late in the evening in the Kremlin, Stalin announced that the State Defense Committee had decided to appoint Zhukov as Deputy Supreme Commander-in-Chief and send him to the Stalingrad region. The main task is to prevent the Germans from capturing the city. For this, the Stavka urgently

transferred the 1st Guards Army of General K.S. Moskalenko to Stalingrad. It should arrive in the Loznoye region and, on the morning of September 2, launch a counterattack on the enemy grouping that had broken through to the Volga, and then link up with the 62nd Army. The 66th Army of General R.Ya. Malinovsky and the 24th Army of General D.T. Kozlov were sent there. Zhukov had to take the necessary measures to ensure the strike of Moskalenko's army and, under his cover, withdraw the 24th and 66th armies to the starting areas. These armies should have been brought into battle immediately, otherwise Stalingrad would be lost.

Georgy Konstantinovich notes in his memoirs that on August 29 he took off from Moscow and four hours later was already at the field airfield in the Kamyshin area. If you believe the "Chronicle of the activities of Marshal of the Soviet Union G.K. Zhukov during the Great Patriotic War of 1941-1945", then on August 29-31 he worked in the General Staff and Headquarters of the Supreme High Command, and led the operations of Stalingrad (from October 1 - Donskoy) front from August 31 to October 3.³¹⁶

³¹³ The Great Patriotic War 1941–1945. M., 1985. S. 613.

³¹⁴ Zhukov G.K. Memories and reflections. T. 2. S. 294.

³¹⁵ See: Russia and the USSR in the Wars of the 20th Century: A Statistical Study. S. 312.

³¹⁶ See: Military Historical Journal. 1991. No. 10. S. 24.

Arriving from Kamyshin to the headquarters of the Stalingrad Front, which was located in Malaya Ivanovka, Zhukov came to the conclusion that the chief of staff, General D.N. Nikishev, and the head of the

operations department, Colonel I.N. the enemy can be stopped. Somewhat later, after discussing the situation with the front commander General V.N. Gordov and army commander Moskalenko, Georgy Konstantinovich came to the conclusion that the 1st Guards Army would not be able to go on the offensive on September 2 - many of its units were still on the way. The 24th and 66th armies will concentrate, at best, by September 5-6. From Zhukov's report to Stalin: "On September 2, the 1st Guards Army was unable to go on the offensive, since its units were unable to go to their original position, bring

ammunition, fuel and organize a battle. In order to prevent the unorganized entry of troops into battle and not incur needless losses from this, after a personal check on the spot, he postponed the offensive to 5 o'clock on September 3.

I appoint the offensive of the 24th and 66th armies for September 5-6. Now there is a detailed development of tasks by all the command staff, and we are also taking measures to provide material support for the operation ... "317

On the morning of September 3, after artillery preparation, the troops of the 1st Guards Army went on the offensive, but advanced only a few kilometers towards Stalingrad. Their further advance was halted by continuous air strikes and counterattacks by enemy tanks and infantry. On the same day, Zhukov received a telegram signed by Stalin: "The situation near Stalingrad is getting worse. The enemy is three versts from Stalingrad. Stalingrad

can be taken today or tomorrow if the Northern Group of Forces does not provide immediate assistance. Demand that the commanders of the troops, standing to the north and north-west of Stalingrad, immediately strike at the enemy and come to the aid of the Stalingraders. No delay is allowed. Procrastination is now tantamount to a crime. Throw all aviation to the aid of Stalingrad. There is very little aviation left in Stalingrad

itself."318

Georgy Konstantinovich already realized the complexity of the situation in Stalingrad. To the north of the city, formations of the German 6th Army broke through to the Volga, separating the troops of the South-Eastern and Stalingrad fronts. From the south, the German 4th Panzer Army, which had turned from the Caucasus back in early August, is rushing towards the Volga. The troops of the 62nd Army are practically isolated in Stalingrad itself, and Paulus' divisions are about to enter the city. But our 62nd, constantly reinforced by suitable units and formations, can still hold out for a day. But on September 4, throwing three armies into the offensive with little or no ammunition (they were supposed to be brought to artillery positions only by the evening of September 4) will not work.

Immediately giving the order to bomb the enemy with all his might, Zhukov asked Stalin for permission to launch a general offensive on 5 September.

317 Zhukov G.K. Memories and reflections. T. 2. S. 297.

318 Ibid. S. 298.

Consent has been received.

At dawn on September 5, along the entire front of the three armies - the 24th, 66th and 1st Guards - artillery and aviation preparation began. But due to the lack of shells, the density of artillery fire was small, it was not possible to completely suppress the enemy's defenses, and therefore the advance of the units was insignificant. Lacking time, the troops did not have time to prepare the offensive well, conduct artillery reconnaissance and identify the enemy's fire system, therefore, naturally, they could not suppress it. In addition, enemy aircraft dominated the air all day and bombed Soviet units. Stalin demanded to continue the attacks, having the main task - to draw as many enemy forces from Stalingrad as possible. The attacks of the Soviet

troops on September 6–7 also ended in vain. "To defeat the enemy at Stalingrad," Zhukov reported to Headquarters on September 7, "the forces that are available here are clearly not enough. It is necessary to concentrate an additional group of troops in order to inflict a stronger blow on the enemy in the shortest possible time ..."³¹⁹ However, no decision was made on an additional transfer of troops. After repeated unsuccessful attempts to break through the enemy's defenses, on September 10, Zhukov again reported to Stalin that it would not be possible

to break through the corridor and connect with the troops of the South-Eastern Front in the city with the forces available to the Stalingrad Front. The enemy significantly strengthened his defenses at the expense of newly approached units from near Stalingrad. Therefore, further attacks by the same forces will be aimless and will inevitably lead to new losses. We need additional reinforcements and time to regroup for a more concentrated attack on the Stalingrad Front. On the afternoon of September 12, on Stalin's orders, Zhukov flew to Moscow. Interestingly, on the same day, General Paulus set off from Stalingrad to Vinnitsa. Hitler also flew there, from whom Paulus received the strictest order to take Stalingrad by decisive assault.

At a meeting with Stalin, Zhukov first of all noted that the 24th, 66th and 1st Guards armies, which participated in the offensive on September 5–11, showed their best side. But they have little howitzer artillery and tanks at their disposal, which are necessary for the direct support of rifle units. The terrain on the sector of the Stalingrad Front is extremely unfavorable for an offensive: open, cut by deep ravines, in which the enemy is well sheltered from fire, and having occupied a number of command heights, has long-range artillery observation and can maneuver fire in all directions.

The immediate needs of the Stalingrad Front in order to create a breakthrough and connect with the South-Eastern Front are at least one more full-blooded combined arms army, a tank corps, three tank brigades, one air army, at least 400 howitzers. Moreover, according to the information of the Chief of the General Staff Vasilevsky, new enemy units from the Kotelnikov area are approaching Stalingrad.

However, both Zhukov and Vasilevsky, who was present at the meeting, agreed that this was only a half measure. They began to mature more cardinal solution. It was clear that the most

³¹⁹ Ibid. S. 300

the combat-ready 6th and 4th tank armies of the enemy were increasingly drawn into the grueling, protracted battles for Stalingrad, and the German command in the operational reserve, in the Volga and Don region, had no more than six divisions scattered along a wide front. The position of the enemy was further aggravated by the fact that Hitler did not have the opportunity to release and throw to the south any forces from other fronts, and his strike groups in the Stalingrad direction and in the Caucasus were about to exhaust their reserves, run out of steam and go on the defensive. In addition, the configuration of the front made it possible to prepare and deliver enveloping strikes on the flanks of the troops of General Paulus, who were covering the less combat-ready Romanian troops. In the future, it was possible to develop an offensive against Rostov and cut off the entire Caucasian grouping of the enemy.

Reporting to Stalin the outlines of a plan for a future large-scale operation, its authors also proposed creating a new front in the Serafimovich area in order to deliver a powerful blow to the operational rear of the enemy grouping operating in the Stalingrad area. It was estimated that it would take about a month and a half to prepare such a large operation. Zhukov and Vasilevsky proposed to divide the entire operation into two stages: first, breaking through the enemy's defenses, encircling his Stalingrad grouping and creating a solid external front, then destroying the encircled enemy and suppressing German attempts to unblock the encirclement from the outside.

Stalin promised to think over the plan and calculate the available resources. The circumstances of the birth of the plan to encircle the German troops near Stalingrad, set out by Zhukov in "Memoirs and Reflections", are almost completely confirmed by A.M. Vasilevsky: the German tank armies were concentrated on a narrow sector of the front, directly in the city area, and their flanks were covered by Romanian troops. It was also known that the huge losses that the enemy continued to bear in the hope of still capturing the city, and especially the fact that he did not have any impressive reserves here, further limited his defensive capabilities. This prompted a decision: to organize and conduct a counter-offensive, and one that would not only radically change the situation in this area, but also lead to the collapse of the still active southern wing of the enemy front. This decision was made in mid-September after an exchange of opinions between Stalin, Zhukov and myself. The essence of the strategic plan was to ensure that from the Serafimovich area northwest of Stalingrad and from the defile of lakes Tsatsa and Bemantsak south of Stalingrad in the general direction to Kalach, which lies west of Stalingrad, to deliver powerful concentric blows on the flanks of the enemy group involved in protracted battles for the city, and then encircle and destroy its main forces - the 6th and 4th German tank armies. "320

By the way, the commander of the South-Eastern (later Stalingrad) Front, A.I. Eremenko, and a member of the Military Council of the front, N.S. Khrushchev, claimed that they also submitted a plan for a future counteroffensive to the Headquarters. "How did the idea of encircling the enemy there arise? Khrushchev recalled. - I'm not saying that it arose only with us, that is, with me and Eremenko, no, it may have arisen with others. But, in general, this question is ripe. What caused it? But what. The fighting on the Stalingrad front dragged on. The enemy concentrated his efforts in a rather narrow direction. This spoke of his weakness: on a broad front, he could not conduct offensive operations and threw manpower into the city, as if into a meat grinder ... As a rule, intelligence worked in good faith and reported correctly. She reported that there were no enemy troops beyond the Don ... In general, our troops firmly held the line of defense, it was already equipped. This cheered us up again. We saw that we had the opportunity to strike on the enemy's flanks and change the state of affairs near Stalingrad. Then Yeremenko and I wrote a memorandum to Stalin, where we expressed our opinion. This opinion boiled down approximately to the following: according to our data, including the data of the reconnaissance that we threw behind enemy lines, and reconnaissance in force, with which we probed the stability of the enemy's defenses, the Germans behind the Don are empty; there are no forces on which they could rely. We do not know what the Stavka has at its disposal, but if we find troops that could be concentrated east of the Don and strike from here to Kalach, and we could strike the enemy's southern wing from the south, then we could surround the enemy who broke into the city and is fighting in Stalingrad itself. What the Stavka had at its disposal and whether it had such opportunities by that time, we simply did not know. We only knew that it was very difficult for us and that we were given very few reinforcements. And if we are given little, then there is nothing to give. So we thought. And we had a thought - are we breaking through an open door, because we do not know the real situation that has now developed in the country? .. "321

No, Nikita Sergeevich did not break through the open door - they got acquainted with the plan. But Khrushchev's plan did not inspire the Headquarters. They did not understand why the counter-offensive should be launched precisely at the time when "the full moon is set and the night becomes bright." But the modesty of the requests for the strike group alerted everyone: "... tanks KV - 10, T 34-48, T-70-40." However, to support the cavalry corps, which was supposed to "play a decisive role" in the operation, this would be enough. Zhukov recalls the following about his communication with Khrushchev and

Eremenko regarding the plan to encircle German troops near Stalingrad: "At a moment of calm, with the permission of the Supreme, Yeremenko and Khrushchev arrived at the command post of the 1st Guards Army ... large counteroffensive, the conversation was mainly about strengthening the troops of the South-Eastern (from September 27 - Stalingrad. - V.D.) and Stalingrad fronts. In response to Yeremenko's question about the plan for a more powerful counterattack, I did not evade the answer and said that in the future the Headquarters would carry out counterattacks much larger

forces, but so far there is neither the strength nor the means for such a plan.”³²²

While the Headquarters and the General Staff hatched a plan to encircle and defeat the enemy near Stalingrad, the Soviet troops defending the city continued to fight stubbornly. The fighters and commanders of the 62nd Army of General V.I. Chuikov defended every street, every house. Units of the 13th Guards Rifle Division of General A.I. Deshpande the steadfastness of the troops of the South-Eastern Front, the enemy still managed to break through to the Volga in the Kuporosnoye area. Chuikov's army was isolated.

The need to prepare a powerful counteroffensive became more and more obvious. At the end of September, during a more detailed discussion of the plan of operation with the participation of Zhukov and Vasilevsky, it was decided to create a new Southwestern Front under the command of General N.F. Vatutin. The Stalingrad Front was renamed the Don Front under the command of General K.K. Rokossovsky, and the South-Eastern Front was renamed the Stalingrad Front under the command of General A.I. Eremenko. It was on these three fronts that the implementation of Operation Uranus to encircle and defeat the enemy grouping near Stalingrad was assigned.

Stalin instructed Zhukov to fly back to the front and take all measures to exhaust and weaken the enemy even more on the eve of the operation. In addition, he and Vasilevsky had to once again delve into the situation on the ground and inspect the areas of action outlined by the plan. Everyone understood perfectly well that the success of

Uranus depended to a great extent on keeping it a deep secret. Therefore, even the commanders of the fronts were not familiar with the plan of the operation as a whole for a long time. Throughout October, Zhukov and the staff of the General Staff

had to carefully think through and solve hundreds of large and small issues. Taking into account intelligence data, it was supposed to surround an enemy grouping of 90-100 thousand people. For its rapid destruction, it was decided to send mainly mobile formations to the inner front of the encirclement. In addition, when developing the plan of operation, it was assumed that the elimination of enemy troops in the Stalingrad region would undermine the entire enemy grouping in the North Caucasus and force it to either hastily retreat through a narrow neck in the Rostov region, or fight in encirclement.

In preparing the operation, Zhukov took into account all the shortcomings of the counteroffensive near Moscow. It was planned to concentrate a large amount of artillery in the direction of the main attacks - to reliably suppress enemy tank divisions, to quickly break through into the depths of his defense and complete the encirclement. It was necessary in deep secrecy to regroup large masses of troops

and deliver for all fronts, primarily for the newly created South-Western, a huge amount of material and technical means. About 30,000 vehicles and 1,300 railway wagons were involved in the transportation of troops and cargo. As a result, by mid-November, it was possible to complete

³²² Zhukov G.K. Memories and reflections. T. 2. S. 307.

concentration of troops. German intelligence missed this training. The Wehrmacht command believed that "the Russians themselves were seriously weakened during the last battles and would not be able to have the same forces in the winter of 1942/43 as they had last winter."

The entire end of October and the beginning of November, Zhukov, like many other representatives of the Stavka, spent in the army. It was necessary to help the command and staffs to fully master the details of the upcoming counteroffensive, their role in it, and the methods of accomplishing certain tasks. So, in the headquarters of the South-Western Front, with the participation of Georgy Konstantinovich, the actions of the 21st combined arms and 5th tank armies were linked in all details. I had to spend a lot of time on the front line and study the nature of the enemy's defense, his system of fire, and the location of anti-tank weapons. Here, Zhukov determined the method and plan of artillery preparation for the offensive, the necessary degree of suppression of enemy defenses, drew up plans for the interaction of aviation and artillery, and distributed targets between them. Immediately, he gave practical instructions: what you need to learn more about the enemy, what you still need to plan, what work to do directly on the ground and with the troops. The attention of the commanders was aimed at the main task - to quickly break through the tactical defense of enemy troops, stun them with powerful blows and quickly bring into action the second echelons to develop a tactical breakthrough into an operational one.

Zhukov took all measures to ensure that not only as successfully and quickly as possible break through the enemy's defenses, but also to save people as much as possible at the same time. After a thorough reconnaissance, the issues of interaction between the South-Western and Stalin-Falek fronts were once again considered, the meeting of advanced units in the Kalach region, as well as their actions after the completion of the encirclement, were discussed.

On the evening of November 11, Zhukov reported to Stalin: "I worked for Yeremenko for two days. I personally examined the enemy positions in front of the 51st and 57th armies. Worked in detail with the commanders of divisions, corps and commanders of the upcoming tasks on "Uranus". The check showed that Tolbukhin (commander of the 57th Army. - V.D.) is preparing better for the Uranus ...

I have been ordered to conduct combat reconnaissance and, on the basis of the information obtained, clarify the battle plan and the decision of the commander ... The two rifle divisions given by the Headquarters (87th and 315th) to Eremenko have not yet been loaded, since they still have not received transport and horse composition.

So far, only one of the mechanized brigades has arrived.

Things are going badly with supplies and with the supply of ammunition. In the troops there are very few shells for the Uranus.

The operation will not be prepared by the due date. Ordered prepare for 11/15/1942

It is necessary to immediately throw Eremenko 100 tons of antifreeze, without which it will be impossible to throw the mechanical parts forward; send the 87th and 315th rifle divisions faster; urgently deliver warm uniforms and ammunition to the 51st and 57th armies with the arrival of the troops no later than 11/14/1942 Konstantinov (pseudonym G.K. Zhukov. - V.D.) "323

Stalin immediately took steps to satisfy all requests.

On November 12, he drew Zhukov's attention to the preparation of aviation:

"To Comrade Konstantinov If

Yeremenko and Vatutin's air preparation for the operation is unsatisfactory, then the operation will end in failure. The experience of the war with the Germans shows that an operation against the Germans can be won only if we have air superiority. In this case, our aviation must fulfill three tasks: First, to concentrate the actions of our aviation in the area of the offensive of our strike units, to

suppress the German aviation and firmly cover our troops. The second is to break the way for our advancing units by

systematic bombing of the German troops standing against them.

The third is to pursue the retreating enemy troops by means of systematic bombing and assault operations in order to completely upset them and prevent them from gaining a foothold on the nearest lines of defense. If Novikov thinks that our aviation is not in a

position to carry out these tasks now, then it is better to postpone the operation for a while and accumulate more aircraft. Talk to Novikov and Vorozheykin, explain this matter to them

and let me know your general opinion.

Vasiliev (Stalin's pseudonym. - V.D.). 11/12/42.

4 hours. No. 170 686."324 Having

completed the development of the plans, Zhukov and Vasilevsky called Stalin and asked for permission to personally report on the most important problems of the forthcoming operation. The meeting at Stalin's took place on the morning of 13 November. Vasilevsky recalls the following: "In short, our conclusions were as follows. The grouping of German troops basically remains the same: the main forces of the 6th and 4th tank armies are still involved in protracted battles in the city area. Romanian units remain on the flanks of these forces (that is, in the directions of our main attacks). Approach to the Stalingrad direction of more or less significant reserves from the depths has not been observed lately. There were also no significant regroupings in the enemy troops operating in this direction. In general, the forces of the parties in the Stalingrad direction, according to available data, are equal by the beginning of the offensive. On the axes of the upcoming strikes of our fronts, as a result of the arrival of reserves from the Headquarters and the weakening of secondary axes, it was possible to create powerful strike groups with such superiority in forces over the enemy, which makes it possible to undoubtedly count on success ... The main role at the beginning of the operation, as envisaged, was assigned to the South- Western front. For this he had everything necessary. By the end of the third or on the fourth day of the operation, a meeting of the tank and mechanized corps of the Southwestern and Stalingrad fronts was planned in the Kalach region. It must close the encirclement of the main enemy grouping in the area of Stalingrad. It was possible to launch an offensive on the South-Western and Don fronts on November 19-20, and on Stalingrad on November 20. 325

324 Ibid. S. 332.

325 Vasilevsky A.M. The work of a lifetime. pp. 223–224.

Returning to the front, Zhukov reported to Stalin on November 14: "1. In recent days, in the areas of Ivanov (the pseudonym of the commander of the Stalingrad Front A.I. Eremenko. - V.D.) and Fedorov (the pseudonym of the commander of the South-Western Front N.F. Vatutin. - V.D.) the approach of new enemy reserves has not been established, only internal regroupings and army reserves were found closer to the front line, in particular, the Romanian tank division in the Romanenko sector (commander of the 5th tank army. - V.D.). Small groups of tanks were set up 5-6 kilometers from the front line of defense, apparently, with these groups of tanks the enemy strengthens the defense of his front line. The enemy sets up a wire at the forefront, creates minefields.

Until now, antifreeze has not been delivered, all cars are filled with vodka. There are also no winter oils and lubricants. Many units, especially reinforcement artillery, did not receive warm uniforms.

2. To date, all parts of Fedorov have reached their original areas and are working on their tasks. Now everyone is working on organizing the rear, speeding up the delivery of ammunition, fuel and food. In the period from 9 to 12.11, enemy aircraft systematically attacked the areas

where Fedorov's units were concentrated. Since 12.11 aviation activity has sharply weakened. From a survey of prisoners captured in various sectors of the Fedorov front, it was established that there was no talk among the enemy troops about our impending resettlement (offensive. - V.D.), apparently, the enemy did not disclose our grouping and our intentions.

3. According to the condition of the units and the course of preparations for Ivanov and Fedorov, the resettlement period can be set for November 18 or 19. I don't think it's worth postponing any further. I ask about your decision and the term of resettlement
notify me.

4. On November 14 and 15 I will be at Chistyakov's (commander of the 21st Army. - V.D.) and Batov (commander of the 65th Army. - V.D.) to check the progress of the preparations. On the evening of 16 I suppose to be in Moscow. Mikhailov (the pseudonym of the Chief of the General Staff A.M. Vasilevsky. - V.D.) from Ivanov will arrive at Fedorov on November 16 at 12 o'clock. 326 On November 15,

Zhukov receives a response telegram from the Supreme Commander-in-Chief: , and then report to me about it

upon arrival in Moscow. If you have the idea that one of them should start resettlement one or two days earlier or later, then I authorize you to resolve this issue at your discretion. front and the 65th Army of the Don Front on November 19, and for the Stalingrad Front on November 20. Stalin approved this decision. Georgy Konstantinovich believed that going on the offensive with a difference of one day would

mislead the enemy about the ultimate goal of the operation of the Soviet troops. In addition, the troops of South

326 Op. Quoted from: Krasnov V.G. Unknown Zhukov. pp. 359–360.

327 Zhukov G.K. Memories and reflections. T. 2. S. 335.

The Western Front of Vatutin were at a greater distance from the Kalach area (the junction of the fronts) than the troops of the Stalingrad Front. Troops began to advance to the starting areas. According to intelligence, the enemy, who was closely following any movement, did not notice the danger looming over him. Formations of the 6th Army and the main forces of the 4th Panzer Army of the Germans continued fighting in Stalingrad. In the direction of the main attacks that had begun, the Romanian troops were still defending themselves. Everything was ready for the start of the counteroffensive. But Zhukov felt a sense of annoyance: on November 17, he was summoned to Headquarters to develop and conduct a diversion operation in the Moscow area with the forces of the Kalinin and Western fronts. How much mental and physical strength was invested in the preparation of such an important offensive at Stalingrad - and on you, all the main things will unfold without you. Zhukov did not have a chance to observe how, at dawn on November

19, the artillery of the Southwestern Front launched a powerful fire attack on the positions of the 3rd Romanian Army. The enemy defense was suppressed in two sectors. The troops of the 5th Panzer Army of General P.L. Romanenko from the bridgehead southwest of Serafimovich and the 21st Army of General I.M. Chistyakov from the bridgehead near Kletskaya went on the offensive, broke through the defenses of the Romanian units and broke into operational space.

The commander of the German 6th Army, General Paulus, immediately felt the impending threat, but did not take timely countermeasures. Only at 22 o'clock did the order of General M. von Weichs, commander of Army Group B, follow: "The situation developing on the front of the 3rd Romanian army forces us to take radical measures to cover the flank of the 6th army and ensure the safety of its supply by the Likhaya railway — Chir. In this regard, I order immediately to separate from the 6th Army two motorized formations, one infantry division, subordinating them to the headquarters of the 14th Panzer Corps in order to strike in the north-western or western direction." 328 General Weichs, apparently, not completely he was aware of the danger, since he allocated a very small amount of forces to parry the blow of the Soviet troops.

On November 20, the Stalingrad Front struck. By the middle of the day, his troops had broken through the enemy defenses, and only now did General Paulus understand what was happening. The troops of the Southwestern and Stalingrad fronts had not yet closed the encirclement, and Paulus on November 22 at 18 o'clock was already radioing: "The army is surrounded ... fuel supplies will soon run out, tanks and heavy weapons in this case will be motionless. I ask you to give me freedom in the decision to leave Stalingrad. In contrast to him, Berlin still continued to indulge in illusions that the Soviet command did not have significant reserves. Hitler demanded that the 6th Army take up an all-round defense and wait for a deblocking offensive from the outside. On November 23, the troops of the South-Western and Stalingrad fronts united in the Kalach-on-Don region,

the Soviet farm. After that, the 64th, 57th, 21st, 65th, 24th and 66th armies were able to develop an offensive against Stalingrad, squeezing the enemy's inner encirclement. 22 divisions and more than 160 separate units with a total number of 330 thousand people were surrounded. It was much more than

328 Op. Quoted from: Krasnov V.G. Unknown Zhukov. S. 361.

it was assumed, therefore, there was a problem with the liquidation of the encircled grouping, since the allocated forces were clearly not enough. In addition, it was impossible to prevent the breakthrough of the troops of the 6th field and 4th tank armies from the boiler, and for this it was necessary to carry out complex regroupings, strengthen the external and internal fronts of the encirclement ... All

this time, Zhukov received detailed information about the course of the counteroffensive near Stalingrad from Vasilevsky, who was in the combat area and coordinated the actions of the fronts. Late in the evening of November 28, Stalin called the headquarters of the Kalinin Front, where Zhukov was located, and asked him to report on his thoughts on the liquidation of the German troops surrounded at Stalingrad.

Already in the morning of the next day, a telegram lay on the table to Stalin the following content:

"The encircled German troops now, in the current situation, without an auxiliary enemy strike from the Nizhne-Chirskaya-Kotelnikovo region, will not risk a breakthrough and exit from the encirclement.

The German command, apparently, will try to keep in their hands positions in the Stalingrad - Vertyachiy - Marinovka - Karpovka - Gornaya Polyana state farm and, as soon as possible, assemble a strike group in the Nizhne-Chirskaya - Kotelnikovo area to break through the front of our troops in the general direction of Karpovka, in order, having broken the front of our units, to form a corridor for feeding the troops of the encircled group, and subsequently withdrawing it along this corridor. Under favorable conditions for the enemy, this corridor can be formed in the Marinovka-Lyapichev-Verkhne-

Chirskaya sector with the front to the north. The second side of this corridor, with the front to the southeast, is along the Tsybenko-Zeta-Gnilovskaya-Shebalin line. In order to prevent the connection

of the Nizhnechirskaya and Kotelnikovskaya enemy groupings with the Stalingrad one and the formation of a corridor, it is necessary:

- as quickly as possible to throw back the Nizhnechirskaya and Kotelnikovskaya groupings and create a dense battle order on the Oblivskaya-Tormosin-Kotelnikovo line. In the Nizhne-Chirskaya-Kotelnikovo area, keep two groups of tanks, at least 100 tanks in each as a reserve; - break the encircled enemy group near Stalingrad into two parts. For what ...

inflict a cleaving blow in the direction of Bol. Rossoshka. To meet him, strike in the direction of Dubinsky, height 135. In all other sectors, go on the defensive and act only in separate detachments in order to exhaust and exhaust the enemy.

After the split of the encircled enemy group into two parts, it is necessary ... first of all, to destroy the weaker group, and then to hit the group in the Stalingrad area with all your might. Zhukov. No. 02, November 29,

1942."329 At the same

time, Zhukov had a telephone conversation with Vasilevsky, who agreed with his considerations.

329 Zhukov G.K. Memories and reflections. T. 2. S. 341–342.

According to the plan of the commander of Army Group "Don" E. Manstein, in order to deblockade the 6th Army, it was planned to carry out the operation "Winter Thunderstorm". In accordance with it, the 4th Panzer Army was to act exactly as Zhukov foresaw: "... launch an offensive with the main forces from the Kotelnikovo area east of the Don River." Why here? "... The enemy will least of all expect such an offensive on the eastern bank of the Don," Manstein believed, "since, given the situation at the front, the concentration of large forces in this area is associated with great risk for the Germans. Therefore, the enemy initially put forward only relatively weak forces in the direction of Kotelnikovo to cover the internal front of the encirclement."³³⁰

If, Manstein believed, "the number of enemy troops in front of Kotelnikovo will increase significantly," then "the order provided for a fallback option: the tank divisions of the 4th tank army were to be urgently and covertly deployed for the enemy along the western bank of the Don to the north, to the Don-Chirsky bridgehead at Nizhne Chirskaya and deliver the main blow from here."³³¹ On December 12, the "Winter Thunderstorm" broke out. The operational summary

of the General Staff of the Red Army noted: "During December 12, the troops of the Stalingrad Front, on the left wing, part of their forces held back the offensive of the infantry and tank units of the enemy northeast of Kotelnikovo and, under its pressure, left several settlements."³³² According to Vasilevsky, they came under attack our three "rather weak rifle divisions, two cavalry divisions and a tank brigade." Over 500 fascist tanks, including "tigers", fell on them. Only 77 tanks managed to be sent against this colossus. It turned out that Zhukov's warnings were not properly heeded. It took heroic efforts, an urgent transfer of reserves, to delay the advance of General Manstein's troops to the aid of the 6th Army. Meanwhile, the headquarters of the Kalinin and Western fronts, under the leadership of Zhukov, hastily prepared a new operation to eliminate the Rzhev-Vyazma ledge, code-named "Mars". On the Western Front, four armies were involved in it, which were supposed to strike at Rzhev and Sychevka. From the Kalinin

Front, four armies also participated in the operation with the task of delivering strikes in a southerly direction, on Bely and Olenino, and further develop the offensive on Smolensk.

Even during the preparation of the operation, it became known about the appearance of enemy reserves in the areas of Smolensk and Vitebsk, which forced them to make adjustments to the original plan for Operation Mars. It was decided from the Kalinin Front to deliver a preemptive strike in the Velikie Luki direction with the forces of the 3rd Shock Army, additionally giving it the 5th Guards Rifle Corps, the 21st Guards Rifle Division, the 2nd Mechanized Corps, other tank and

³³⁰ Manstein E. Lost Victories // Per. with him. Smolensk, 2003, p. 380.

³³¹ Ibid. S. 381.

³³² Op. Quoted from: Battle of Stalingrad. Chronicle, facts, people: In 2 books. M., 2002. Book. 2. S. 202.

artillery units. After analyzing

the possible options for the actions of the 3rd shock army, its commander, General K.N. Galitsky, decided to surround the Velikolukskaya enemy grouping with double coverage, followed by destruction in parts. It was planned to strike the main blow south of Velikiye Luki on Petrushino, and the second - north of the city. It soon became clear that this decision was not consistent with the intentions of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command. It was rejected by Zhukov, who arrived at the army headquarters on

November 19, accompanied by the commander of the Kalinin Front, General M.A. Purkaev. He noted that the military operations of the army are organically linked with the operations of the troops of the front and, in general, of all the armed forces. One plan, even deeply thought out, is not able to suddenly, radically change the situation. Therefore, the main thing in an army operation is its role and significance on an operational and strategic scale. All strikes should contribute to the counter-offensive near Stalingrad that began on November 19, to tie down the enemy's reserves. From this follows the task of the 3rd Shock Army in the forthcoming actions in the Velikoluksky direction - to attract enemy forces. The task will be considered completed, regardless of whether Novosokolniki is occupied or not, if the enemy cannot withdraw forces from the army sector for transfer to the south.

The main blow in the operation was to be delivered to the 5th Guards Rifle Corps of General A.P. Beloborodov. The Lovat River flowed in the area of the breakthrough. On its opposite bank, insignificant enemy forces held the defense, and further in depth, on the heights, was his main defensive position with strongholds. On November 24, parts of the corps launched an offensive. However, it was not possible to break through the enemy defenses, since enemy firing points were not suppressed.

At the cost of enormous efforts and losses, units of the 3rd Shock Army managed to complete the encirclement of Velikiye Luki by the morning of November 29. The enemy began to advance infantry, tank and motorized divisions to the battle area in order to defeat the penetrating troops of the Kalinin Front with enveloping strikes from the northwest and southwest, to unlock Velikiye Luki

and restore the position.

At this critical moment, Zhukov again arrived in the 3rd shock army in order to sort out the situation on the spot and outline the area for the 2nd mechanized corps to enter the battle. Without stopping at the army headquarters, he immediately went to the front line, to the location of the 5th Guards Rifle Corps. The situation in the corps sector was very difficult, its units had difficulty holding back enemy counterattacks. The 357th division was

especially hard hit, against which four German divisions operated. It suddenly turned out that the division was commanded by A.L. Kronik, the same former foreman of the squadron with whom Zhukov served together in Belarus. The meeting was unexpected and cordial. In those days, writers visited the division, among whom was Alexander Fadeev. At a friendly dinner in the dugout, Zhukov and Kronik remembered their joint service in the 7th Samara Cavalry Division, back in the twenties. On the site of the 357th Rifle Division, where the 2nd Mechanized Corps was to be brought into battle, Zhukov carefully studied the area: it was necessary to choose a line for deploying the corps,

determine how best to provide air cover and artillery support. The reconnaissance conducted by Zhukov showed that this direction was unsuitable for this, so he immediately ordered the use of the corps to the south, in the center of the offensive zone of the 5th Guards Rifle Corps. If on the whole, albeit with great effort, the troops of the Kalinin Front carried out their task, then the

group of troops of the Western Front, which was supposed to break through the enemy defenses and move towards them, continued to mark time. "The Supreme Commander," recalls Zhukov, "demanded me to immediately go to I.S. Konev and find out the reasons for the failure and, if possible, rectify the situation there. Arriving at the command post of the Western Front, I came to the conclusion that it was useless to repeat the operation. The enemy figured out our plan and managed to bring significant forces to the area of operations from other sectors.³³³ Meanwhile, in the area of operations of the Kalinin Front, the enemy managed to cut off and surround the mechanized corps of General M.D. Solomatin. At the cost of enormous efforts,

with the help of the reserve units of the Headquarters, the corps was nevertheless withdrawn from the encirclement. Interestingly, in 1999, a book by the famous American historian David Glantz was published in the United States under the title "Zhukov's Biggest Defeat. The catastrophe

of the Red Army in Operation Mars, 1942. The author claims that in September 1942, the Supreme Command Headquarters developed two strategic offensive operations: one in the western direction - "Mars", the other in the South - "Uranus". The main one, according to Glantz, was to be Operation Mars. Zhukov had to coordinate the actions of the Western and Kalinin fronts. The task of Operation Mars was to defeat the German 9th Army, which formed the basis of the Army Group Center, in the area of Rzhev, Sychevka, Olenino,

Bely. The Soviet troops were opposed by well-trained German divisions, and in the breakthrough sector - by a tank division. The German command had four divisions in reserve, and three more tank divisions were in readiness for action. In addition, German intelligence had reliable information about the plans, timing of the offensive, forces and means of the Western and Kalinin fronts. All this predetermined the failure of Operation Mars. Thus, according to Glantz, two famous Soviet commanders, leading troops in two different strategic directions, achieved different results. The troops led by Zhukov could not complete the task, and the fronts subordinate to him suffered heavy losses. Military historian A. S. Orlov, analyzing Glantz's book in the journal "World of History" (2000. No. 4), believes that the concept

of the American historian does not correspond to reality. In fact, the main point was that Operation Mars was intended to ensure the success of Operation Uranus. Its terms were postponed depending on the state of affairs and the development of events in the Stalingrad direction, but the grouping of troops intended for the offensive,

333 Zhukov G.K. Memories and reflections. T. 2. S. 345.

was created in advance and was the object of intensive reconnaissance of the enemy. The Germans knew a lot about the offensive zone, the forces involved, their operational formation and the approximate goals of the offensive. Moreover, as one of the former heads of intelligence of the state security organs P.A. Sudoplatov writes, the Soviet command, in order to more reliably exclude the transfer of German reserves from the west to the south, through the double agent Alexander Demyanov ("Heine", known to the German reconnaissance as "Max") on November 4, 1942, threw "information" to the leadership of the Wehrmacht that "the Red Army will strike the Germans on November 15 not near Stalingrad, but in the North Caucasus and near Rzhev."³³⁴ Thus, the Headquarters deliberately sacrificed operational success in the West for the sake of the strategic - in the South. As a result, such a large-scale strategic offensive of the Soviet

troops near Stalingrad turned out to be completely unexpected for the Wehrmacht: the effect of surprise was achieved. "We had absolutely no idea of the strength of the Russian troops in the area," General Jodl wrote. "Before, there was nothing here, and suddenly there was a blow of great force, of decisive importance."³³⁵

At the same time, the German command, expecting a strike by the Soviet troops near Rzhev, repelled it without much difficulty. For Zhukov, who may have been unaware of the leak, this was a surprise for which the Soviet troops paid too much. Operation "Mars" began on November 25, that is, two days after the Southwestern and Stalingrad fronts

closed the encirclement around the troops of General F. Paulus. The weather was not favorable: there was heavy snowfall, aircraft could not operate, artillery and tanks could not see targets. But it began in such conditions because at any cost it was necessary to pin down the main forces of Army Group Center, not to allow the enemy to transfer reserves from the western to the southern direction. Despite a difficult start and heavy losses, our troops fought until December 20, that is, they did everything to deprive Manstein, the commander of Army Group Don, who had moved to the rescue of the German 6th Army, the opportunity to receive reserves.

At the same time, A.S. Orlov admits that the troops of the Western and Kalinin fronts have far from completely fulfilled the operational task. The troops of the Western Front penetrated the enemy defenses in an 8-kilometer sector to a depth of 10 kilometers, the 39th Army of the Kalinin Front liquidated the Urdomsky defensive area of the Rzhev salient, and the 22nd Army of this front advanced 16 kilometers deep into the enemy defenses in the Karskaya area. The troops of both fronts were unable to break through the enemy's defenses in depth, reach the lines indicated by the Headquarters, encircle the enemy grouping and suffered significant losses: about 215.7 thousand people, including 70.4 thousand irretrievably (12.9 percent), as well as 1366

³³⁴ See: P. Sudoplatov, *Intelligence and the Kremlin. Notes of an unwanted witness.* M., 1966, p. 188.

³³⁵ Military history magazine. 1971. No. 9. S. 18.

tanks.

The operation ended in failure, but it was not a defeat. Convinced that the strategic task of pinning down up to 30 German divisions in the Rzhev direction and forcing the German command to reinforce the Rzhev-Sychevsky bridgehead with the reserves of the Army Group Center and the command of the Ground Forces was resolved, Zhukov ordered the operation Mars to be stopped, which had already become unnecessary. Soviet troops near Rzhev inflicted significant damage on the opposing Wehrmacht grouping. "The losses of the Germans in the Rzhev direction were enormous," states the German historian Brent Wicker. On December 14, in the midst of heavy fighting on the Kalinin and Western fronts, Vasilevsky called Zhukov: the enemy was rushing towards Stalingrad. The army group "Got",

carrying out the operation "Winter Thunderstorm", struck along the Kotelnikovo-Stalingrad railway in the sector of the 51st Army. There was a threat of the release of the 6th German army. Georgy

Konstantinovich understood Vasilevsky's condition well. Now it was necessary to take radical measures, which meant abandoning the attack on Rostov and turning the strike force of the right wing of the Southwestern Front to the southeast, in the rear of the enemy's Tormosin group.

But together they conceived the operation "Big Saturn", which included a strike on Rostov and cutting off the Stalingrad and Caucasian groups of German troops. Now Vasilevsky was quite reasonably afraid of a breakthrough of German tanks (a battalion of Tiger tanks participated in the offensive of the Goth group for the first time on the Soviet-German front) to the Paulus army and the failure of the operation that had begun so well. By this time, the position of the 51st Army had become extremely difficult. All the reserves of the front and the army were used up, and the enemy continued to build up the force of impact and inexorably move forward. But on December 16, the troops of the right wing of the Southwestern Front launched an offensive in the area of the Middle Don, trying to reach the rear of the Tormosinskaya group of troops of the Don Army Group (Operation Little Saturn). The tank corps of the front, supported by artillery

and aviation, broke through the defenses of the 8th Italian Army with powerful ramming strikes and advanced 100-200 kilometers in eight days, and on December 24 they captured the Tatsinskaya station. The commander of Army Group Don, General Manstein, had to abandon further attempts to release the troops surrounded at Stalingrad and, in order not to be surrounded himself, throw everything that was at hand to fend off the blows of the Southwestern Front. At the same time, the 51st, 2nd Guards and 5th Shock Armies of the Stalingrad Front stopped the enemy's Kotelnikov grouping and themselves went on the counteroffensive. They overturned the troops of the Goth army group and liberated Kotelnikovo on December 29. The enemy retreated in disarray along the entire front. The distance separating the Stalingrad grouping of the enemy from the outer front of the encirclement increased to 200-250 kilometers. General Paulus, his soldiers and officers no longer had any hope of salvation. An inevitable disaster was coming.

The headquarters of the Supreme High Command took all measures to put an end to the

surrounded by an enemy grouping and free the troops of the Don and Stalingrad fronts, necessary for the speedy defeat of the German troops in the south of the country. But, mindful of the unsuccessful attempt to liquidate the "cauldron" of encirclement in early December by the forces of two fronts, this time it was decided to unite all the troops in the Stalingrad region under a single command.

At the end of December, a discussion of a plan of further actions took place in the State Defense Committee, and Stalin proposed that the leadership for defeating the encircled enemy be handed over to one person.

Zhukov believed that it was necessary to concentrate command in the hands of Eremenko: he suffered through this operation and defended Stalingrad, and he had to finish off Paulus. However, the prevailing opinion was to transfer the troops to the subordination of Rokossovsky, the commander of the Don Front. In addition, Georgy Konstantinovich had the unpleasant mission of announcing the decision to Eremenko - after all, he sincerely respected the merits of Andrei Ivanovich and was sure that he would be offended. And so it happened. Al Eremenko was greatly offended, and

considered Zhukov to be the culprit of the unfair decision. A few days later, he made an entry in his diary in which he scolded Georgy Konstantinovich for what the world was worth. Undeservedly. On December 30, 1942, the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command

issued an order: "1. In order to defeat the enemy as quickly as possible in the Rostov direction and to better control the armies operating in this direction, form the Southern Front from January 1, 1943, consisting of the 2nd Guards, 51st and 28th armies. In the future, keep in mind the strengthening of the front with 2-3 more armies. 2. To appoint Colonel General Eremenko A.I. as commander of the

troops of the Southern Front, N.S. Khrushchev, members of the Military Council. and Chuyanov A.S., chief of staff of the front, Major General Varennikov I.S. 3. The headquarters and front departments of the Stalingrad Front should be transformed into the

headquarters and departments of the Southern Front ... 4. From January 1, 1943, 57, 64, 62 armies should be transferred to the Don Front, and

the Stalingrad Front should be liquidated from January 1, 1943. The funds allocated to the Stalingrad Front for the operation "Ring", the 57th, 64th and 62nd armies should be transferred to the Don Front ... The Headquarters of the Supreme High Command I. Stalin G. Zhukov . Voronov, who, together with the Military

Council of the front, developed and on December

27, 1942

presented a plan for the defeat of the Stalingrad enemy group (Operation "Ring"), However, Zhukov was not satisfied with this plan, since it did not provide for decisive actions to cut and quickly destroy the troops of General Paulus . He reported this to Stalin, who agreed with his arguments. Here is what was said in the directive of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command of December 28:

"The directive of the Headquarters of the Supreme Command to the head of the artillery of the Red Army - the representative of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command, General N. N. Voronov ... The main drawback of the plan you presented for the "Ring" is that the main and auxiliary strikes go in different directions and do not close anywhere, which makes doubtful success operations. In the opinion of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command, your main task at the first stage of the operation should be to cut off and destroy the western grouping of encircled enemy troops in the area of Kravtsov, Baburkin, Marinovka, Karpovka, so that the main blow of our troops from the Dmitrievka area, state farm No. 1, Baburkin turn south to the Karpovskaya station area, and direct the auxiliary strike of the 57th Army from the Kravtsov and Sklyarov area towards the main attack and close both attacks in the Karpovskaya station area. Along with this, it would be necessary to organize an attack by the 66th Army through Orlovka in the direction of the village of Krasny Oktyabr, and to meet this attack, an attack by the 62nd Army, in order to close both attacks and thus cut off the Zavodskoy area from the main enemy grouping.

The headquarters orders the plan to be redone on the basis of the above. The date proposed by you for the start of the operation under the first plan is approved by the Rate. Complete the first stage operation within 5-6 days after it started.

Submit the operation plan for the second stage through the General Staff by 9 January, taking into account the first results of the first stage. Headquarters of the Supreme High Command I. Stalin."³³⁷ Zhukov was not

at Stalingrad at the beginning of the counteroffensive, he was not destined to see the completion of the defeat of the German troops along the banks of the great Russian river. The Headquarters began the implementation of the Voronezh-Kharkov strategic operation, an important link in which was to be the defeat of the enemy in the Ostrogozhsk and Rossosh regions. The troops of the Voronezh Front (General F.I. Golikov) and the 6th Army of the South-Western Front (General N.F. Vatutin), who were opposed by Army Group B (General M. Weikhs), had to solve this problem. The enemy had a superiority in manpower by 1.3 times and in aviation by 1.5 times, an almost equal number of guns and mortars, but three times less tanks. According to the plan of the Ostrogozhsk-Rossosh operation, it was planned to deliver the main blow in converging directions with the forces of the 40th and 3rd tank armies, by the end of the fourth - fifth day to surround and defeat the enemy in a short time.

In preparing the operation, Zhukov, together with the command of the Voronezh Front, carried out work to refine the plan of the operation, paid great attention to the creation of strike groups, which were to break into the enemy's defenses and build on the success of the offensive. The issues of using artillery in breaking through enemy defenses, the interaction of infantry, tanks and aircraft were carefully worked out. At the same time, a system of measures was developed and put into practice to disguise and keep secret all regroupings of troops, to misinform the enemy, and to organize command and control.

About how much work the representatives had to do

³³⁷ Op. Quoted from: Krasnov V.G. Unknown Zhukov. S. 371.

Rates, according to a telegram sent to Moscow on January 6:

"1. All issues of operational-tactical decisions in the army of Moskalenko (40th Army. - V.D.) were worked out personally with the army commander, division and brigade commanders. Now we are at Rybalko (commander of the 3rd tank army. - V.D.). On January 6, 1943, they held a meeting and briefing with the formation commanders. In the army of Rybalko and the cavalry group, the situation is bad with the approach of transports with ammunition, fuel, and also the approach of troops by rail. After unloading, the troops need to march from 4 to 6 days. We are afraid that the railway may fail. Personally, the following can be said about Rybalko: he is a well-prepared person and understands the situation well.

2. Now we are working on the interaction of fronts and armies at the junctions personally with comrades Kharitonov (commander of the 6th Army. - V.D.), Rybalko, Fedorov (pseudonym Vatutina. - V.D.) and Filippov (pseudonym Golikov. - V. D.). Fedorov is with us, in two hours he will leave for the headquarters of the front. Today Filippov and I are leaving for the central group. Konstantinov (pseudonym Zhukov. - V.D.)

Mikhailov (pseudonym Vasilevsky. - V.D.) 6.1.43

20.00. 338 On January 12, reconnaissance in force was carried out

by the forces of the advanced detachments, and on January 14, the main forces of the Voronezh Front went on the offensive. Four days later, they not only completed the encirclement and dissection of the Ostrogozh-Rossoshansk group, but also managed to create the outer and inner fronts of the encirclement. As a result of the Ostrogozhsk-Rossosh operation, the main enemy grouping (13 out of 21 divisions) was surrounded and partially destroyed. The enemy lost more than 140 thousand people, of which 86 thousand were captured. But even here, Georgy Konstantinovich did not have a chance to raise one hundred grams of front-line for the

victory - he was already on the Volkhov Front, which, together with the troops of the Leningrad Front, was preparing for Operation Iskra - breaking the blockade of Leningrad. In early January, Headquarters received reports from its representative, Marshal K.E. Voroshilov, who was in Leningrad, that the successful outcome of the operation was beyond doubt. Such a complacent mood alerted Stalin, and he considered it necessary that Zhukov checked on the spot how the Iskra was being prepared. On the way, Georgy Konstantinovich stopped by Moscow to have another talk with Stalin. I didn't have a chance to go home, I left a short letter for my wife: "January 8, 1943 My dear

Shurik! What a failure! I wanted to drop in on you for 30-40 minutes, but, alas, you ended up in the theater. Of course, you will say that I am to blame - I did not warn you of my intention. It

so happened that he
was delayed with the

transfer of the train from one road to another. But what to do? Let's split the blame. How are you feeling? I'm nothing yet. Healthy. Except the damn joint. He still depresses me. I try to heal as much as possible.

salt baths and heat rays. Well, that's all for
now ... Your Georges.
On the Volkhov

front, Zhukov got acquainted with the state of affairs in the 2nd shock and 8th armies. On the morning of January 11, from Velikiye Luki, he reported to Stalin about the identified shortcomings. The divisions, which were to advance around the enemy's Sinyavino defense center, had few tanks and firepower. Interaction at the junctions of armies, divisions and regiments was poorly worked out, divisional reserves were too far from the first echelon. The commander of the Volkhov Front, General K. A. Meretskov, "has very poor artillery observation, which will worsen even more as our troops advance through the wooded area. In order not to throw shells and mines in vain, the front must urgently be given an aeronautical balloon detachment and one or two links of spotter aircraft.

But these comments and wishes of Zhukov, as has happened more than once, were not taken into account. As a result, some divisions were never able to break through the enemy defenses. The effect was that the units did not have the necessary experience in conducting offensive battles in a wooded and swampy area, artillery fire was not effective enough, and the interaction between infantry and tanks was disrupted. "The main shortcoming in organizing the

breakthrough of the 2nd shock army," Zhukov reported to Stalin, "is the incorrectly planned method of artillery preparation. More time was allotted for all kinds of fire raids and less time for targeted methodical firing at firing points. 339 By order of Stalin, the front command immediately began to eliminate the shortcomings identified by Zhukov, once again worked out in detail the plan for the upcoming operation. The morning of January 12 was frosty. Low clouds hung over the earth. At times it snowed heavily. The troops were waiting for the signal. Zhukov was haunted by the thought: would the enemy prevent him, would he cover the battle formations with his own artillery fire? "I will not hide, that morning we were worried," Georgy Konstantinovich later admitted. But the operation has begun. And it felt like a mountain had been lifted off my shoulders! It became clear to us that the enemy did not know what forces we had at our disposal, and that the timing of our powerful strike was unexpected for him.

During the operation, Zhukov sent one division commander who had made a mistake to command a regiment. During the breakthrough of the enemy's defenses, this regiment played a major role in the offensive sector, the former division commander personally led one of the battalions into the attack. In the evening, Zhukov called this officer, thanked him for his service, ordered him to return to his former duties as division commander, and presented him with a military award for his bravery. On January 18, the troops of the Volkhov and Leningrad fronts united. Leningrad

finally received a land connection with the mainland. "I saw," recalls Zhukov, "with what joy the fighters of the fronts that broke through the blockade rushed towards each other. Ignoring the artillery shelling of the enemy from the direction of the Sinyavino Heights, the soldiers fraternally hugged each other tightly. This

339 Op. Quoted from: Krasnov V.G. Unknown Zhukov. S. 375.

It was truly a joy that has been through suffering!"³⁴⁰

On the same day, by the Decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, G.K. Zhukov was awarded the military rank of Marshal of the Soviet Union. The battle for Stalingrad was over. On January 8, 1943, Generals N.N. Voronov and K.K. Rokossovsky sent the text of the ultimatum to the commander of the 6th German Army surrounded at Stalingrad, Colonel General Paulus and his deputy. But, despite the obvious inevitability of defeat, the ultimatum was rejected. A day later, after a powerful artillery preparation, the troops of the Don Front went on the offensive. At first the enemy resisted, but then faltered and began to retreat. On January 31, the southern group of German troops was finally defeated. Its remnants, led by Field Marshal F. Paulus, surrendered. On February 2, the remnants of the northern group also surrendered. For skillful leadership of combat operations to encircle and defeat the Nazi troops near Stalingrad, Georgy Konstantinovich Zhukov was awarded the Order of Suvorov of the first degree No. 1. A.M. Vasilevsky, N.N. Voronov, N.F. Vatutin, A.I. Eremenko, K.K. Rokossovsky.

The American researcher G. Salisbury in his book "The Great Battles of Marshal Zhukov" noted: "In the hour of mortal danger, Stalin again turned to Zhukov. Stalingrad hung by a thread. His fate, and perhaps Russia's, was entrusted to Zhukov's hands. The battle near Moscow made Zhukov a national hero... After Stalingrad, no one challenged Zhukov's superiority. And after Stalingrad, no one doubted anymore - Russia, having Zhukov at the head of its armies, would eventually defeat Germany. There is nothing to add to these words.

Chapter X. On the fiery arc

No wonder Georgy Konstantinovich liked to repeat that in the war calculation with a miscalculation go along the neighboring paths.

It can be seen that the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command was overly inspired by the successes at Stalingrad and again underestimated the enemy. Having incorrectly considered that the enemy had no forces left for active offensive operations and the Germans intended to leave the Dnieper, she sent the troops of the Voronezh, South-Western and Southern fronts to pursue them in order to reach the Dnieper along the entire strip from Chernigov before the start of the spring thaw. to Kherson.

However, the German command, in an effort to prevent the deterioration of the situation on the southern wing of its front, gathered additional forces and managed to break through the defenses of the right wing of the Southwestern Front with a concentrated blow. In early March, units of the front retreated beyond the Seversky Donets, to its eastern bank. After that, the enemy, having regrouped his main forces, transferred the fighting to the zone of the Voronezh Front. On March 16, German troops again captured Kharkov and began to develop a strike in the Belgorod direction ...

All this time, Zhukov was with Timoshenko on the North-Western Front, whose troops for many months, since last year

³⁴⁰ Zhukov G.K. Memories and reflections. T. 2. S. 196.

spring, they could not liquidate the Demyansk ledge, which was defended by formations of the 16th German army. The headquarters of the Supreme High Command came to the conclusion that it was necessary to act with the involvement of significant forces and deliver deeper enveloping strikes. According to the plan of the Headquarters, set out in the directive of February 6, the 1st shock and 27th armies were to close the encirclement of the enemy from the north and south during the offensive, then, moving eastward, destroy the German units in the Ramushevsky corridor and, turning to the west, to defeat the enemy troops in the area of Staraya Russa. After that, the 27th Army became subordinate to the Special Group of Forces of General Khozin, which was tasked with destroying the encircled Demyansk group.

Zhukov was entrusted with coordinating the actions of all the troops participating in the operation. However, the offensive was launched on February 15 with the forces of only two (11th and 53rd) armies, since the 27th and 1st shock armies were not ready. At the same time, the enemy, fearing encirclement and considering holding the Demyansk bridgehead unpromising, began to withdraw the 16th field army from it and at the same time strengthened the defense of the Ramushevsky bridgehead. In this regard, on February 20, Stalin sent Zhukov the following directive.

"In the Demyansk area, the enemy began to hastily withdraw his units to the west. There is a danger that he will be able to withdraw his divisions across the Lovat River and the operation "Polar Star" planned by us may be jeopardized. I consider it absolutely necessary to start the operation of

Trofimenko (commander of the 27th Army. - V.D.), Korotkov (commander of the 1st Shock Army. - V.D.) and Khozin three to four days ahead of schedule. Waiting for your urgent message. Vasiliev (Stalin's pseudonym. - V.D.). 341 But when the troops of the 27th and 1st shock armies went on the offensive, the enemy had already carried out the planned

maneuvers and settled down across the Lovat River. During this time, due to rains and early thaw, the roads became impassable, the swamps began to open up, fall through and completely become covered with water. After repeated attempts, the troops of the Northwestern Front managed to break through the enemy defenses and reach the Polist and Radya rivers, and prepared to force the Lovat. But since the terrain became difficult and there was a real threat to get stuck in the swamps, Zhukov had to stop further offensive actions. Stalin agreed with him, especially since the south, the Kharkov region, became the main headache. Zhukov was needed there.

In Moscow, where Zhukov arrived on March 16, he had to go by all-terrain vehicle along broken roads through Valdai, Bologoye, Vyshny Volochok, Torzhok, Kalinin. It was not possible to rest, so they immediately summoned me to the Kremlin. The situation on the Southwestern and Voronezh fronts was discussed at the traditional night dinner at Stalin's.

After the armored and motorized units of the enemy, advancing from Kramatorsk, pushed back parts of the Southwestern Front across the Seversky Donets River, German units from the Poltava and Krasnograd region went on the offensive. The commander of the Southwestern Front, General N. F. Vatutin, pulled back the units of the 3rd

341 Op. Quoted from: Russian archive: Great Patriotic War. Headquarters of the Supreme High Command: Documents and materials. 1943 T. 16 (5-3). pp. 76-77.

tank and 69th armies and organized denser battle formations west and southwest of Kharkov. But the Voronezh Front, which at that time was commanded by General F.I. Golikov, did not carry out the withdrawal of troops. It was there that Zhukov was supposed to go in the morning to deal with the situation on the spot. The fate of Golikov, as commander of the front, was already a foregone conclusion. On the afternoon of March 18, Zhukov arrived in Kursk by a special train, which contained an armored staff car and two platforms equipped with anti-aircraft guns. This train was

placed at his disposal, evidently not by chance. Stalin, of course, knew that in endless air flights, the life of the Deputy Supreme Commander-in-Chief several times turned out to be literally in the balance: either enemy aircraft would fly in, or technical problems would force them to make an emergency landing. Yes, probably, Georgy Konstantinovich himself also experienced not very pleasant feelings, somehow watching through the side window an air battle between the fighters of his escort and the Messerschmitts who sensed prey.

At the headquarters of the Voronezh Front, which was located in the village of Streletskaya Sloboda near the city of Oboyan, F.I. Golikov reported on the situation. From Zhukov's message to Stalin, it followed that "it was worse than the one that the General Staff officer reported in the morning. After the capture of Kharkov, enemy units advanced without much resistance in the Belgorod direction and occupied Cossack Lovat. 342 L.F. Minyuk, general for special assignments under G.K. or report specifically.

"Oh, you magnates!" - only Zhukov threw his habitual expression and turned away.

Outside the window, staff officers were fussing, running, loading something onto the car. I rode on a horse with foamed sides as a messenger, handed someone a package with a report and sped back. There was confusion, as if in anticipation of an imminent tank attack.

Zhukov resolutely left the premises, found out where the front-line communications center was, and from there called Stalin on the HF, reported the situation and demanded that everything nearby be moved from the Stavka reserve to prevent the enemy from striking in the Kursk direction. The Supreme Commander did not keep himself waiting. A little later, Zhukov was told from the General Staff that the troops of the 21st Army, the 1st Tank Army and the 64th Army were converging to the Belgorod region, already captured by the enemy ... "343 However, time was lost, and on the afternoon of March 18, parts of the tank SS Corps. Field Marshal General

E. Manstein, evaluating results counter-offensive near Kharkov in February-March 1943, wrote: "The second counterattack of our group ended with the capture of Kharkov and Belgorod; the growing mudslide precluded further operations. Actually, the Yug group had one more goal - as

342 Zhukov G.K. Memories and reflections. T. 3. S. 10.

343 Op. Quoted from: Sokolov B. Unknown Zhukov: a portrait without retouching in the mirror of the era. pp. 383-384.

the final phase of the operation, together with the Center group, to clear the enemy from the arc in the Kursk region, cutting deep to the west into the German front, and create a shorter front here. But we had to abandon this intention, because the Center group declared that it could not participate in this operation. So this arc remained an unpleasant ledge on our front, which opened up certain operational possibilities for the enemy and at the same time limited our possibilities. 344 On March 19, Zhukov left for the Belgorod region in order to organize defenses north of the city and thereby cover the direction to Kursk. The

21st Army was on the defensive here, and the troops of the 1st Tank Army were concentrated in the area south of Oboyan. He spent several days in the troops: he carefully examined the positions, gave recommendations on where to place combat guards, where to create the front line of defense. Several times he went to the front line, where, together with the command, he solved the issues of fire interaction at the junction of the armies, the preparation of counterattacks in case the enemy tried to break through to Oboyan. Repeated attempts by the enemy to break through the defenses of the Soviet troops in the Belgorod region and on the Seversky Donets, where the 64th Army took up positions, did not produce results. From that time on, the situation

on the Voronezh Front stabilized until the end of July 1943. Both sides were preparing for a decisive battle.

Stalin placed all responsibility for the surrender of Kharkov and Belgorod on F.I. Golikov, commander of the troops of the Voronezh Front, who was relieved of his post on March 22. Army General N.F. Vatutin was appointed in his place. Zhukov greatly appreciated Nikolai Fedorovich, a very intelligent, efficient and modest man. Short in stature and very mobile, outwardly he represented the complete opposite of Georgy Konstantinovich. By the way, in December 1942, Zhukov, in the strictest secrecy, made a trip to Vatutin on the Southwestern Front. Its results were marked by the defeat of the 8th Italian Army and the unprecedented march of the 24th Panzer Corps into the deep enemy rear, after which Manstein was forced to abandon his attempt to release Paulus' troops. In the official history of the Great Patriotic War, Stalin is considered the initiator of the removal of Golikov from his post. The memoirs of N.Kh. Bedov, the former head of security G.K. Zhukov, may be of

some interest. "These days (March 19-20. - V.D.), in a telephone conversation with Headquarters," writes Bedov, "G.K. Zhukov demanded to replace the front commander. He said that General Golikov was not capable of coping with the situation. I remember how the marshal, apparently in response to an objection, firmly stated by telephone that Golikov was repeating old mistakes. Near Sukhinichi, he showed himself poorly, commanding the 10th Army (meaning the December 1941 counteroffensive of the troops of the Western Front, in which the 10th Army took part on the left wing of the front. - V.D.). And now he made a more serious mistake. We cannot destroy the troops. The headquarters, at the insistence of G.K. Zhukov, released General F.I. Golikov from

front command. Just in case, we note that the author of this testimony had a dry and strained relationship with Zhukov, and Georgy Konstantinovich's inner circle did not like him either - he too emphasized the exclusivity of his position as an NKVD officer. On March 22, Zhukov, together with the new commander of the Voronezh Front, Vatutin, again

visited the advanced positions of the 21st Army, studied the situation, and personally interrogated the prisoners twice. At the headquarters of the army, with the command staff, he analyzed the actions of the troops in fulfilling the main task - to prevent the enemy from advancing towards Kursk. The next day, he solved the same issues in the 40th Army.

On the morning of March 24, Georgy Konstantinovich with a group of officers on two all-terrain vehicles left for the Central Front, commanded by K.K. Rokossovsky. For two days, Zhukov worked at the headquarters of the front, located in the village of Svoboda, went to the troops. He patiently listened to the commanders, their opinions and suggestions, even if they differed from his own. But if the marshal made any decision, he demanded its unquestioning implementation. Colleagues who often communicated with him noted that Zhukov became more restrained and balanced, no longer broke into shouts and harsh words. Extreme excitement could only be guessed from the moving nodules. It can be seen that the difficult military experience was not in vain. And, despite all the complexity, the situation was not as critical as during the battles near Moscow or Stalingrad, when one had to experience inhuman stress, act at the limit of physical and mental strength. Zhukov and Rokossovsky did not sit up at headquarters, together with the front commander he spent most of his time in positions, traveled almost the entire defense zone, visited the zones of operations of the 13th, 70th, 65th, 48th armies.

He returned to Kursk, having collected solid information about the position of the troops and the intentions of the German command. On April 8, Stalin was presented with a report "on the possible actions of the enemy in the spring and summer of 1943 and considerations on our defensive battles for the coming period": "... The enemy, having

suffered heavy losses in the winter campaign of 42/43, apparently will not be able to create large reserves in order to launch an offensive again to seize the Caucasus and reach the Volga with the aim of a deep bypass of Moscow.

In view of the limited size of large reserves, the enemy will be forced in the spring and in the first half of the summer of 1943 to develop his offensive operations on a narrower front and solve his problem strictly in stages, with the main goal of the campaign to capture Moscow.

Based on the presence of groupings against our Central, Voronezh and Southwestern fronts at the moment, I believe that the enemy will launch the main offensive operations against these three fronts in order to defeat our troops in this direction and gain freedom of maneuver to bypass Moscow along shortest direction.

... Apparently, in the first stage, the enemy, having gathered the maximum of his forces, including up to 13-15 tank divisions, with the support of a large number of aircraft, will strike with his Oryol-Krom group around Kursk from the northeast and the Belgorod-Kharkov group

bypassing Kursk from the

southeast. An auxiliary strike with the aim of cutting our front should be expected from the west from the Vorozhba region, which is between the rivers Seim and Psel, to Kursk from the southwest. With this offensive, the enemy will seek to defeat and encircle our 13th, 70th, 65th, 38th, 40th and 21st armies ...

... It must be expected that the enemy this year will place the main stake in offensive operations on his tank divisions and aviation, since his infantry is now much less prepared for offensive operations than last year.

At present, in front of the Central and Voronezh fronts, the enemy has up to 12 tank divisions and, having pulled up 3-4 tank divisions from other sectors, can throw up to 15-16 tank divisions with a total strength of up to 2,500 tanks against our Kursk grouping.

... In order for the enemy to crash against our defenses, in addition to measures to strengthen the anti-tank defense (anti-tank defense. - V.D.) of the Central and Voronezh fronts, we need to collect 30 IPTAP regiments from passive sectors and transfer them to the reserve Headquarters in threatened areas (anti-tank artillery regiments. - V.D.); to concentrate all self-propelled artillery regiments on the Livny-Kastornoe-Stary Oskol sector. It is advisable to immediately give part of the regiments for reinforcement to Rokossovsky and Vatutin and concentrate as much aviation as possible in the reserve of the Headquarters, so that massive air strikes in cooperation with tanks and rifle formations will break up strike groups and disrupt the enemy's offensive plan ...

I consider it inappropriate for our troops to go on the offensive in the coming days in order to forestall the enemy. It would be better if we exhausted the enemy on our defenses, drove out his tanks, and then, bringing in fresh reserves, by going over to a general offensive, we finally finished off the enemy's main grouping.

Konstantinov (pseudonym Zhukov. — V.D.)..."345 A

comparison of Zhukov's report with the plans of the German command shows that once again Georgy Konstantinovich showed an extraordinary gift of strategic foresight. But this foresight, both in this and in all other cases, was the result not only of military talent, but also of the huge amount of hard and painstaking work that he constantly carried out in the troops.

On March 13, 1943, the command of the Ground Forces issued Operational Order No. 5 signed by Hitler, which set out directive instructions for the conduct of military operations on the Eastern Front in the coming months. It set the task, after the spring thaw, to preempt the Soviet troops in the offensive in certain sectors of the front and thereby impose their will on the Red Army. In accordance with Order No. 5, the commander of Army Group South, Manstein, was to concentrate a strong tank grouping north of Kharkov by mid-April, and Army Group Center, commanded by Colonel General Kluge, was to create a strike force south of Orel. Both groups were to encircle and destroy

345 Op. by: Collection of documents of the Supreme High Command for the period of the Great Patriotic War. T. 3, January - December 1943. M., 1969. S. 351-353.

Soviet troops inside the Kursk ledge. The tasks of

the troops and measures to ensure them in the new offensive operation, which received the code name "Citadel", were set out in the operational order of the Fuhrer No. 6:

"... I decided: as soon as weather conditions allow, to spend in as an offensive strike this year, Operation Citadel.

Therefore, this offensive is of particular importance. It must be carried out quickly and with great penetrating power. It must pass the initiative for this spring and summer into our hands.

In this regard, all preparations should be carried out with the greatest discretion and vigor. Use the best formations, the best weapons, the best commanders, and a large amount of ammunition in all main directions. Every commander, every private must be imbued with an understanding of the decisive significance of this offensive. The victory at Kursk should serve as a torch for the whole world. ... The goal of the offensive, by means of a massive, mercilessly and quickly carried out offensive strike by each of the attacking armies

from the Belgorod region and south of Orel, is to surround the enemy forces located in the Kursk region and destroy them with a concentrated offensive. In the course of this offensive, we should reach a shortened front line that saves our forces ... "346

Stalin, having received Zhukov's report, instructed Vasilevsky to seek the opinion of the fronts. The Supreme Commander called Vatutin and Rokossovsky himself and demanded that they submit considerations on assessing the front-line situation and on the plan for future actions. In their reports, according to Vasilevsky, "the commanders reported that with regard to the enemy's forces and his intentions, their opinion coincides with the opinion of G.K. Zhukov and the General Staff." And then Vasilevsky writes: "As for the plan of action for the troops, the command and staff of the Central Front spoke out in favor of destroying the enemy's Oryol grouping by the combined efforts of the troops of the Western, Bryansk and Central Fronts, while it had not yet prepared for the offensive, and thereby depriving the enemy of the opportunity use it to strike through Livny on Kastornoye at the same time as a blow from Belgorod. The leadership of the Voronezh Front spoke only about the intentions of the enemy.³⁴⁷ Stalin was in deep thought. Zhukov offered to defend, and the commanders of the Central and, as it turned out, the Voronezh fronts, to attack.

After a detailed discussion, the Stavka decided, strengthening the defenses in all the most important directions, to concentrate the main efforts north and south of Kursk, where, as expected, the main events should unfold. Here it was supposed to create a strong grouping of troops, which, having repulsed the enemy's blows, was supposed to go on the offensive, inflicting the main blow on Kharkov, Poltava and Kyiv in order to liberate the Donbass and the entire Left-Bank Ukraine. Zhukov was assigned the general

346 Op. Quoted from: Dashichev V.I. Bankruptcy strategy of German fascism. T. 2. S. 410–413.

347 Vasilevsky A.M. The work of a lifetime. S. 301.

leadership of the Central and Voronezh fronts and control over the implementation of the instructions of the Headquarters.

in mid-April , a preliminary - testifies Zhukov, - **Headquarters "...Already decision was made on a deliberate defense** (hereinafter it is highlighted by Zhukov. - V.D.). True, we returned to this issue more than once, and the final decision on deliberate defense was made by the Stavka in early June 1943 ... The Stavka considered the Voronezh, Central, South-Western and Bryansk fronts to be the main active

fronts at the first stage of the summer campaign. Here, according to our calculations, the main events should have played out. We wanted to meet the expected offensive of the German troops with powerful means of defense, to defeat them, and first of all to break the enemy's tank groups, and then, going on the counteroffensive, finally defeat him. Simultaneously with the plan of deliberate defense and counter-offensive, it was decided to develop a plan of offensive operations as well, without waiting for the enemy's offensive if it was to be delayed for a long time.

Thus, the defense of our troops was, of course, not forced, but purely deliberate, and the Stavka made the choice of the moment for going on the offensive dependent on the situation. The idea was not to rush into it, but also not to drag it out."³⁴⁸ The enemy also knew that the Soviet troops were preparing to meet the enemy on the

Kursk Bulge with a stubborn defense. For example, in a message from the People's Commissariat of State Security, sent on May 7 to Stalin, it was said that intelligence data received by the NKGB resident in London regarding the plan for Operation Citadel and the assessment by the German command of the combat readiness of Soviet troops in the Kursk-Belgorod direction. The resident handed over to the NKGB the text of a telegram obtained by undercover means from the commander of Army Group "B", Field Marshal M. von Weichs, sent on April 25 to the operational department of the Wehrmacht's Supreme High Command:

"A comprehensive assessment of the enemy's readiness to oppose the implementation of the Citadel plan remains the same ... The

main concentration of enemy forces, which, obviously, were still some time ago on the northern flank of the army group of the south, can now be clearly defined in the main area of \u200b\u200bfuture operations: Kursk - Sudzha - Volchansk - Ostrogozhsk ...

However, it is not known at this time whether this concentration of forces is for offensive or defensive purposes. At present, armored and mechanized formations are evenly distributed in groups behind the front line as strategic reserves in anticipation of the German offensive. So far, there are no indications that these groups will merge into larger formations or appear on the front line ... To counteract the implementation of the Citadel plan, the enemy now has approximately 90 formations located south of the Belgorod-Kursk-

Maloarkhangelsk line. Offensive units

³⁴⁸ Zhukov G.K. Memories and reflections. T. 3. S. 23.

The Army Group of the South will meet stubborn enemy resistance in a deeply echeloned and well-prepared main defensive zone with numerous tanks buried in the ground, with strong artillery and local reserves. The main defense efforts will be concentrated in the main Belgorod-Tamarovka sector... At the present time it is difficult to predict whether or not the enemy will try to avoid the threat of encirclement by retreating to the east, which will follow the breakthrough of the main sections on the Kursk-Belgorod-Maloarkhangelsk line...

In conclusion, it should be noted that the events indicate more defensive than offensive intentions of the enemy. This is absolutely unmistakable in regard to the sector of the front occupied by the 6th Army and the 1st Armored Army. It can be assumed that in the event of the transfer of reinforcements to the area north of the front of the army grouping of the south and with the beginning of the advance of strategic reserves to the front line or their merging into larger formations, the offensive actions of the enemy will become more real, however, even under this condition, the enemy will not even be able to prevent our execution plan "Citadel" ... "349

Our resident also pointed out that the name "Citadel" refers to the impending operation to break through the defenses of the Soviet troops in the Kursk-Belgorod region, and not to the city of Velikie Luki, as previously assumed. Stalin instructed

Vasilevsky and Antonov to develop all the documentation for the adopted plan in order to discuss it again in early May. And Zhukov was to fly on April 18 to the North Caucasian Front, whose troops fought fierce battles to eliminate the enemy's Taman group, his 17th field army.

On the North Caucasian front, Zhukov immediately went to the troops in order to get acquainted with the situation in the 18th and 56th armies on the spot. On his instructions, several massive air strikes were carried out against enemy battle formations and airfields. As a result, the German troops stopped active hostilities in the sector of the landing group of the 18th Army. Due to the unsatisfactory readiness of the 56th Army for offensive operations, Zhukov postponed the start of its offensive for several days. On his initiative, in the 9th and 37th armies, the formation of special detachments from among volunteers began to cross the floodplains and seize bridgeheads on the banks of the Kurka and Kuban rivers. All these measures were approved by Stalin on April 24. On April 29, the troops of the North Caucasian Front resumed the offensive. The main blow to the north and south of the village of Krymskaya was

delivered by the 56th Army. As a result of fierce fighting on May 4, the village was liberated, but there were no forces to develop the offensive. Failed to succeed in other areas. In early July, active operations in the zone of the North Caucasian Front ceased, and its troops everywhere went over to the defensive.

In the first half of May, Zhukov returned to Moscow and again joined in the preparation of the plan for the summer campaign. All types of intelligence confirmed his assumptions about the intentions of the German command in the near future.

349 Op. by: Andronikov N.G. Hitler's torch was extinguished on a fiery arc // Military History Journal. 1993. No. 8. S. 6–7.

time to go on the offensive in the Kursk area. The deadlines were called the fastest. First, the headquarters of the Central, Bryansk, Voronezh and Southwestern fronts were warned by the Stavka that strikes in the Oryol-Kursk or Belgorod-Oboyan direction should be expected on May 10-12.³⁵⁰ Then a directive went to the troops with new information received from undercover intelligence: the Germans are planning to launch an offensive on our front between May 19-26.³⁵¹

At the same time, some front commanders continued to doubt the advisability of a deliberate defense. Particularly active was the commander of the Voronezh Front, General Vatutin, who, without denying defensive measures, persistently tried to convince Stalin and Vasilevsky of the need to deliver a preemptive strike against the Belgorod-Kharkov enemy grouping. In this he was supported by a member of the Military Council of the front, N. S. Khrushchev. Stalin ordered that this option be carefully worked out. But Zhukov, firmly convinced that he was right, defended the previously developed plan. His point of view was shared by Vasilevsky, Antonov and other members of the General Staff.

" After many discussions , - testifies Zhukov, -
The Supreme Commander decided to meet the German offensive with the fire of all types of defense in depth, with powerful air strikes from strategic reserves. Then, having exhausted ^{And} finish him off with a powerful the operational counterattacks and bled the enemy, ^{And} counteroffensive of the Belgorod-Kharkov deep offensive operations on ^{on} and Oryol directions, then hold ^{on} all major areas 352

Having learned about the likelihood of an enemy offensive on May 19-26, Zhukov went to the headquarters of the Central Front, and then to the 13th Army. After a detailed study of the situation, he sent the following report to Stalin: "22.5.43. 4.48.
Comrade
Ivanov

(pseudonym I.V. Stalin. - V.D.) I report the situation on 21.5.43
on the Central Front. ...At 21.5. all types of reconnaissance established:
in the first line of defense, the enemy in front of the Central Front has 15 infantry divisions; in the second line and in the reserve - 13 divisions, of which three are armored.

In addition, there is information about the concentration of the 2nd Panzer Division and the 36th Motorized Division south of Orel. Information about these two divisions requires verification.

The 4th tank division of the enemy, previously located west of Sevsk, has been transferred somewhere. In addition, there are three divisions in the area of Bryansk and Karachev, of which two are tank divisions.

Therefore, at 21.5. the enemy against the Central Front can operate with thirty-three divisions, six of them -
tank.

Instrumental and visual reconnaissance of the front identified 800

³⁵⁰ See: Russian archive: Great Patriotic War. Headquarters of the Supreme High Command: Documents and materials. 1943 T. 16 (5-3). S. 148.

³⁵¹ Ibid. S. 153.

³⁵² Zhukov G.K. Memories and reflections. T. 3. S. 31.

guns, mainly 105 and 150 mm. The enemy has the main mass of artillery against the 13th Army, the left flank of the 48th Army and the right flank of the 70th Army, that is, on the Troeno-Pervoye Pozdevo sector. Behind this main artillery grouping on the Zmievka-Krasnaya Roshcha line, there are up to 600-700 tanks. Moreover, the main mass is concentrated east of the Oka River.

In the area of Orel, Bryansk, Smolensk, the enemy concentrated 600-650 aircraft. The enemy has the main aviation grouping in the Orel area. In recent days, both on the ground

and in the air, the enemy has kept himself passive, limiting himself to small aerial reconnaissance and rare fire raids...

I personally was at the forefront of the 13th Army, looked through the enemy's defenses from different points, watched his actions, talked with the division commanders of the 70th and 13th armies, with the commanders of Galanin (commander of the 70th army. - V.D. .), Pukhov (commander of the 13th Army. - V.D.) and Romanenko (commander of the 48th Army. - V.D.) and came to the conclusion that the enemy was not immediately ready for an offensive on the front line.

Maybe I'm wrong, the enemy is very skillfully disguising his preparations, but, analyzing the location of his tank units, the insufficient density of infantry formations, the absence of heavy artillery groupings, and the scattered reserves, I believe that the enemy cannot go on the offensive until the end of May ... Yuryev (pseudonym G.K. Zhukov. - V.D.) ... "353 In the memoirs of the former commander of Army Group

South, Field Marshal E. von Manstein, it is mentioned that on May 4 in Munich, under the leadership of A. Hitler, a meeting was held with the participation of commanders Army Groups "South" and "Center" (Field Marshal General

X.G. von Kluge), Chief Inspector of the Tank Forces, Colonel General G. Guderian, Chief of the General Staff of the Ground Forces, Colonel General Zeitzler, Commander of the 9th Army, Colonel General V. Model and other senior officials. In his report, Model noted the extraordinary strengthening of the anti-tank defense of the Soviet troops, as well as the difficulties associated with the need to break through the heavily fortified defense. Model's report, which enjoyed Hitler's special confidence, made a strong impression on the latter. He began to fear that the offensive of the German troops would not be carried out quickly and successfully, or at least so quickly as to carry out the encirclement of large forces of Soviet troops. Neither von Kluge, nor von Manstein, nor Zeitzler shared Hitler's fear. "In the event of a delay, the group ("South". - V.D.), Manstein believed, "along with an increase in tanks, an increase in the number of infantry divisions will be required to overcome the enemy's defense system."354 Hitler, summing up the results of the meeting, announced the need for more once again consider the question of carrying out Operation Citadel on time or of postponing it. On May 11, Army Group South received an order to postpone the start of the operation to mid-June.

So, Zhukov's predictions turned out to be correct again. At the same time, as

353 Op. Quoted from: Krasnov V. G. Unknown Zhukov. pp. 392–395.

354 Manstein E. Lost Victories. S. 528.

it can be seen from his report to Stalin that he scooped up a lot of information, being in the thick of the troops, at the forefront of defense. But it has always been associated with a great risk to life. Bedov recalls one such episode:

"As I remember the day of July 11, 1943 on the Kursk Bulge. Before giving the order to the Headquarters to advance to the Bryansk Front, Zhukov arrived at the place of the intended strike. The car was left in the woods, about a kilometer from the front line. Then he went on foot with the front commander M.M. Popov. Already at the very front he said: - Now you stay, and I'm alone ... He had to make sure that the area for the breakthrough of tanks was chosen without error. Crawled. I am behind him. At the neutral zone, Zhukov carefully examined the area. Suddenly, mines began to explode - it was clear that the Germans had noticed us. One is in front, the other is behind. - The third will be ours! shouted Zhukov. I rushed and covered the marshal with my body. The mine exploded four meters away, fortunately, on a hillock - the fragments went on horseback. But the explosion shook us hard - we were both shell-shocked. Georgy Konstantinovich lost his hearing in one ear. The professor who examined him in Moscow said that he needed to go to the hospital.

What a hospital! We will be treated on the spot," Zhukov replied. It is clear that not everyone liked the presence on the ground of representatives of the Stavka, especially the Deputy Supreme Commander. So, Rokossovsky wrote: "... Already the first months of the war showed the futility of the created improvised operational command bodies of the "directions", uniting the management of several fronts. These "directions" were quite rightly eliminated. Why, then, did the Headquarters again begin to use the same thing, but under a different name - the representative of the Headquarters for coordinating the actions of the two fronts? Such a representative, being with the commander of one of the fronts, most often, interfering in the actions of the commander, replaced him. At the same time, he did not bear any responsibility for the state of affairs, which was completely assigned to the front commander, who often received conflicting orders on the same issue: one thing from the Headquarters, and another from its representative. The latter, being in the capacity of coordinator at one of the fronts, naturally showed a great interest in bringing as many forces and means as possible to where he himself was. This was most often done to the detriment of other fronts, which had to carry out no less complex operations.

In addition, the mere presence of a representative of the Headquarters, especially the Deputy Supreme Commander (meaning G.K. Zhukov. - V.D.), at the front commander limited the initiative, tied the front commander, as they say, hand and foot. At the same time, there was a reason to think about some distrust of the front commander on the part of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command.

It is difficult to agree with the point of view of Konstantin Konstantinovich. It seems that being near a senior in office simply hurt his pride. After all, it is hard to even imagine what could have happened if all the forces on the outskirts of Moscow had not been united under the leadership of Zhukov, if he had not coordinated the actions of the fronts in other directions, including near Stalingrad. But Rokossovsky for some reason forgets that at the decisive hour of the Battle of Stalingrad, the Stavka

centralized the control of all troops in his, Rokossovsky, hands.

It is also not clear why later, in 1967, Rokossovsky distorted the facts related to Zhukov's stay on the Central Front during the beginning of the Battle of Kursk, claiming that he left the command post on July 5, a few hours after the battle began. After all, the fact that Zhukov stayed with Rokossovsky until July 9 is confirmed by many sources, including the Chronicle of the Activities of Marshal of the Soviet Union G.K. Zhukov during the Great Patriotic War of 1941–1945. It clearly states that on July 5–9 Zhukov was on the Central Front, and then, on Stalin's orders, flew to the headquarters of the Bryansk Front . the left wing of the Western Front, as provided for by the plan.

The terms of Zhukov's stay on the Central Front are confirmed by his driver A. N. Buchin:

"Day after day, week after week, Zhukov circled the Kursk salient. He delved into the smallest details of the construction of fortifications, the installation of barriers. Before my eyes, Georgy Konstantinovich greatly puzzled the sappers by proposing to mine the area about fifty paces from the trenches and between them. I am not an expert in these matters, but it is still not clear why the sappers initially resisted. Then, when the Germans were beaten off, Zhukov again went around some of the same areas that had changed a lot, the scorched earth, everywhere there were monuments to the marshal's foresight: burned-out boxes of German tanks that had broken through our front line and found death in the minefields in the depths of the defense.

When thousands of guns roared and the Battle of Kursk began, Zhukov, as it were, retired. Marshal was unrecognizable - he looked like an outside observer of what was happening on the Central Front, where on July 5 he was overtaken by the beginning of the German offensive. Probably, the impression was deceptive, Zhukov would undoubtedly intervene if, as a representative of the Stavka, something did not suit him in the actions of the Rokossovsky front. The battle, however, proceeded as planned, which was more than sufficient compensation for the marshal's arduous months of preparation.

Zhukov's behavior changed dramatically when, after the successful Rokossovsky front, we moved north to the adjacent Bryansk front. For two days he circled the troops prepared for the offensive, and on July 11 he climbed the front line with binoculars, checking the correctness of the choice of terrain for the offensive of the tank corps. By the way, it was on this day that he came under mortar fire, which, in addition to the head of security Zhukov, Buchin also recalls. And from the words of Buchin cited above, as well as from a number of other sources, it is clear that Georgy Konstantinovich Rokossovsky fully trusted, did not interfere in his affairs unnecessarily and did not interfere with the fight.

By the way, on the pages of many post-war memoirs and memoirs between our generals, real "battles" unfolded, to our great regret. As a human being, one can understand: someone was undeservedly offended, glory bypassed someone. But here in

It is difficult to find reproaches or undeserved accusations against anyone in Zhukov's "Memoirs and Reflections". Probably because he himself had great respect for the military work of his colleagues.

M. Kayden in the book "Tigers are on fire" noted: "When studying the preparation of the Russians for the battle of Kursk, one thing is clear - the Germans have long had a reputation for preparing for the battle methodically, effectively, without missing anything. Now the Russians have surpassed the enemy in detailed and thorough preparation ... Under the firm leadership of Zhukov, the Russians worked around the clock, filling the Kursk salient with human and material resources.

The main idea proposed by Zhukov in the upcoming operation was the development of measures that he used in fierce battles near Moscow and planned in the battle of Stalingrad. Defense first. Then, in classic Zhukovsky style, as the German onslaught waned and the enemy forces were decimated by superior Russian firepower, the tide of the battle would change. Zhukov, carefully following all the ups and downs of the battle, determines the moment - the German offensive has run out of steam. It is at this moment that Zhukov will throw his armies against the hordes of the Wehrmacht.

A. Hitler, making a decision on May 11 to postpone the start of Operation Citadel, subsequently postponed it several more times. The final decision matured with Hitler only towards the end of June. On July 1, all the commanders of the formations and commanders of the corps of the ground forces and the air fleet, who were to take part in the operation, were called to the Fuhrer's headquarters in East Prussia on July 1. At this meeting, Hitler announced that it would begin on July 5th. "He correctly justified his decision to launch Operation Citadel by the fact that we can no longer wait," E. Manstein recalled, "until the enemy starts his offensive, perhaps only in winter or after the opening of a second front. The rapid and complete success of the offensive is also desirable in connection with the impact it will have on our allies and on our homeland."³⁵⁶ Soviet intelligence agencies were also aware of the readiness of the German troops to go on the offensive. On July 2, the Headquarters informed the commanders of the troops of the Western,

Bryansk, Central, Voronezh, Southwestern and Southern Fronts that, according to available information, the Germans could go on the offensive on our front during the period July 3-6. On the night of July 5, the commander of the 13th Army, General N.P. Pukhov, called the headquarters of the Central Front, who reported that the captured prisoner had announced the start of the offensive by the German troops at about 3 o'clock in the

morning. Rokossovsky later recalled: "A little more than an hour remained before this deadline. To believe or not to believe the testimony of the prisoners? If they are telling the truth, we should already begin the artillery counter-preparation planned by us, for which up to half of the combat set of shells and mines were allocated.

There was no time to request the Headquarters, the situation was developing in such a way that delay could lead to serious consequences. The representative of the Stavka G.K. Zhukov, who was present at the same time,

356 Manstein E. Lost Victories. S. 532.

came to us the night before, entrusted the solution of this issue to me. I think he did the right thing. This allowed me to immediately give an order to the artillery commander of the front to open fire.”³⁵⁷

Zhukov's memoirs completely coincide with this testimony: “K.K. Rokossovsky asked

me: - What are we going to do? Report to Headquarters or give an order for counter-training? “We won't waste time, Konstantin Konstantinovich. Give

the order, as provided for by the plan of the front and the Headquarters, and I will now call Stalin and I was immediately connected with the Supreme. He was at Headquarters let me know about the decision .

and had just finished speaking with AM Vasilevsky. I reported on the data obtained and the decision to conduct counter-training. JV Stalin approved the decision and ordered that he be informed more often.”³⁵⁸

At 02:20 on July 5, an order was given to begin a 30-minute artillery counter-preparation, in which 2,460 guns and mortars took part. This delayed the enemy's transition to the offensive by 2.5–3 hours. Throughout the day on July 5, he tried to break through the defenses of the troops of the Central Front, but could not achieve significant results.

The effectiveness of our artillery operations at dawn on July 5, 1943 is estimated differently. Zhukov believed that “artillery counter-training inflicted heavy losses on the enemy and disorganized the management of the offensive troops, but we still expected great results from it. Observing the course of the battle and questioning the prisoners, I came to the conclusion that both the Central and Voronezh fronts started it too early: German soldiers were still sleeping in trenches, dugouts, ravines, and tank units were hidden in waiting areas. It would be better to start counter-training about 30-40 minutes later.”³⁵⁹

Marshal of the Soviet Union I.S. Konev also realistically evaluates the results of artillery counter-preparation. “It should be noted that on both fronts the first powerful fire strike was inflicted on the main means of attack. However, it was not possible to thwart the enemy's offensive, although the interaction between the main forces and means of the enemy's first echelon was disrupted, and the force of its initial strike was significantly weakened ... Of course, the effect of counter-preparation could be higher if the enemy's infantry and tanks were concentrated more accurately in starting position on the night of July 5 and if it had been launched at the moment when the enemy came out of hiding after a night's rest before the battle. Unfortunately, our air strikes against enemy airfields were ineffective, since the enemy raised his air force at dawn on July 5.”³⁶⁰ There are also more positive assessments. For example, A.M. Vasilevsky,

³⁵⁷ Rokossovsky K. K. Soldier's duty. S. 217.

³⁵⁸ Zhukov G.K. Memories and reflections. T. 3. S. 44.

³⁵⁹ Ibid. S. 46.

³⁶⁰ Konev I.S. Notes of the front commander. M., 2000. S. 108–109.

who was at the beginning of the Battle of Kursk on the Voronezh Front, noted: "... From 4 p.m. on July 4, the enemy undertook combat reconnaissance on a wide sector of the Voronezh Front with about four battalions supported by 20 tanks, artillery and aircraft ... A prisoner captured in battle, a German from the 168th Infantry division, showed that the troops were handed dry rations, portions of vodka and that on July 5 they should go on the offensive. From a telephone conversation with Zhukov, I learned that the German defectors who defected to us on July 4 on the Central Front confirm the same thing. After consulting with Vatutin, we decided on the night of July 5 to carry out the artillery and aviation counter-training provided for by the plan, which, as it turned out later, had an exceptional effect. The enemy, who was in the initial position for the offensive, suffered heavy losses in manpower and equipment. The system of artillery fire prepared by him was disorganized, command and control of troops was disrupted. Enemy aviation also suffered losses at the airfields, and the connection with it at the combined arms command was also broken ... The Nazis were hardly able to launch an offensive instead of 3 o'clock in the morning on July 5, three hours later. "361

Marshal of Artillery K.P. Kazakov, the author of the essay "Always with infantry, always with tanks", argued that "artillery counter-training, if not disrupting the enemy's offensive, then inflicted heavy losses on him, disrupted control and significantly weakened and disorganized the first strikes of enemy troops who were still very strong.

For some reason, the German military leaders E. Manstein in their book "Lost Victories" and G. Guderian in "Memoirs of a Soldier" did not even mention the artillery counter-preparation carried out by the Soviet troops on July 5. While fierce battles were already in full swing on

the Central and Voronezh fronts, Zhukov, as already noted, was at the location of the Bryansk Front, which was completing preparations for Operation Kutuzov to defeat the Oryol grouping of the enemy and eliminate the Oryol ledge. The troops of the Bryansk, Central and left wing of the Western Fronts, with a total number of about 1.3 million people, who had over 21 thousand guns and mortars, 2.4 thousand tanks and self-propelled guns, more than 3 thousand aircraft, were to participate in the Oryol offensive operation. They were opposed by the troops of the 2nd Panzer and 9th Armies of the Center Group (about 600 thousand people, over 7 thousand guns and mortars, about 1200 tanks and assault guns, more than 1100 aircraft). Soviet troops outnumbered the enemy in all respects, which largely predetermined the successful outcome of the operation. On July 11, Zhukov reported to Stalin: "The preparations for Kutuzov have been completely completed. Today we carried out power reconnaissance in order to clarify the front line of the enemy's defense. According to the reports of the army commanders and formation commanders in

all these areas, I believe that our units are in front of the front line. In fact, today's actions of the reinforced battalions showed that the first enemy trenches were occupied by small units. All active battalions captured the first trench today. IN

in accordance with the updated front line of the enemy, amendments are now being made for artillery and aviation for the period of artillery preparation.

The offensive of the Bryansk Front, supported by the troops of the left wing of the Western Front, began on July 12. As expected, the enemy swept across the Oryol bridgehead and began to transfer troops here that were operating against the Central Front. Rokossovsky immediately took advantage of this and on July 15 also went on the offensive.

However, on the Voronezh front, the enemy still continued to inflict tangible blows. A particularly critical situation developed on July 11–12 in the Prokhorovka area, where the largest tank battle in the history of wars took place with the participation of more than one and a half thousand combat vehicles. Stalin ordered Zhukov to immediately fly there and take over the coordination of the actions of the Voronezh and Steppe (created on July 9) fronts. On July 13, Zhukov arrived at the headquarters of the Voronezh Front.

"Fierce,

bloody battles were going on in all sectors of the front," he later wrote, "hundreds of tanks and self-propelled guns were burning. Clouds of dust and smoke hung over the battlefield. It was a turning point in the battle in the Belgorod direction."³⁶² And on the same day, a meeting was held at Hitler's headquarters with the participation of the commanders of the army groups,

Manstein and Kluge. At the meeting, Hitler declared that the situation in Sicily, where the Western powers had landed on July 10, had become serious. He also noted that the allied forces would probably land in the Balkans or in southern Italy. "It is necessary to form new armies in Italy and in the Western Balkans. The Eastern Front must give up part of its forces, and therefore Operation Citadel cannot continue any longer."³⁶³ Kluge reported on the heavy losses of the 9th Army, which forced it to stop the advance for an indefinite period. "Since Field Marshal von Kluge considered the resumption of the offensive of the 9th Army excluded," Manstein recalled, "and moreover, considered it necessary to return it to its original positions, Hitler decided, at the same time taking into account the need to withdraw forces to transfer them to the Mediterranean Sea, to stop the operation" Citadel.³⁶⁴ Having discussed the situation at the headquarters of the Voronezh Front, where the commander of the Steppe Front, General I.S. Konev, was also located, Zhukov came to the conclusion that it was necessary to continue the launched counterattack more energetically in order to capture defensive lines in the Belgorod region on the shoulders of the

retreating enemy. And only after that, having regrouped, the troops of the Voronezh and Steppe fronts were to launch a decisive counteroffensive.

But the counterattack of the Voronezh Front did not reach its goal, and the enemy grouping, which wedged into the location of our troops for 30-35 kilometers, could not be defeated. In the heat of the battle, a blow was struck in the forehead, and the advantageous configuration of the front, which made it possible to cut the base of the German group and surround it, was not used. July 15–16

³⁶² Zhukov G.K. Memories and reflections. T. 3. S. 54.

³⁶³ Manstein E. Lost Victories. S. 539.

³⁶⁴ Ibid. S. 540.

all the armies of the front were ordered to stop the offensive and use stubborn defense to exhaust the forces of the advancing enemy. The offensive

of the troops of the Southwestern and Southern fronts, which began on July 17, had a significant impact on the course of events in the Belgorod-Kharkov direction. Field Marshal von Manstein, commander of Army Group South, at the request of the headquarters of the Ground Forces, was forced to order the withdrawal of the 2nd and 3rd tank corps from the battle on the Voronezh Front sector and their transfer to the south, to reinforce the 6th field army operating against the Southern Front. And on the night of July 19, a general withdrawal of German troops began, operating against the Voronezh Front. The concept of Operation Citadel was finally buried. This was foreseen by Marshal Zhukov back in April, not only having

unraveled the plans of the enemy, but also quite accurately determining the place and time of his strikes. Resisting the temptation to go on the offensive ahead of the enemy, he persuaded Stavka and Stalin to adhere to the plan of military operations in the Kursk region, the essence of which was a deliberate defense with the simultaneous preparation of a counteroffensive. This is approximately the point of view of most domestic historians.

For obvious reasons, the conclusions drawn by the other side are somewhat different. Here is what Manstein wrote about this: "Operation Citadel was terminated by the German High Command even before the outcome of the battle for the following reasons: firstly, due to the strategic influence of other theaters of military operations (Mediterranean Sea) or other fronts (2 tank army on Oryol Bulge), and only, secondly, in connection with a tactical failure, namely, stopping the offensive of the 9th Army, which called into question at least a quick achievement of the outcome of the battle."³⁶⁵

Meanwhile, on July 23, the troops of the Voronezh and Steppe fronts reached the front line of the enemy's defenses. But in order to go over to the counteroffensive, it was necessary to regroup the troops, carefully reconnoiter the enemy, and re-organize the interaction of all branches of the military, especially infantry and tanks. All this could take about eight days, about which Zhukov reported to Stalin. "Reluctantly, after Georgiy repeated negotiations," Konstantinovich testifies, "the Supreme Commander approved our decision, since there was no other way out then."³⁶⁶

In preparation for the operation of the troops of the Voronezh and Steppe fronts (codenamed "Commander Rumyantsev") to defeat the Belgorod-Kharkov enemy grouping, Zhukov, on the instructions of Stalin, was on the Bryansk Front from July 28, in the 4th tank and 11th armies, then worked out the interaction of the troops of the Voronezh and Steppe fronts, having been in the 5th Guards, 53rd, 5th Guards Tank and 1st Tank armies. It was they who had to strike the main blow. The idea of the Soviet command was to break through the enemy defenses in a 22-kilometer sector with

a powerful frontal attack by the adjacent wings of the Voronezh and Steppe fronts.

³⁶⁵ Ibid. S. 542.

³⁶⁶ Zhukov G.K. Memories and reflections. T. 3. S. 57.

northwest of Belgorod, then cut the enemy grouping with subsequent envelopment and defeat in the Kharkov region. At the same time, it was planned to deliver an auxiliary strike from the Gotni area to Akhtyrka in order to ensure the actions of the main forces of the Voronezh Front from the west, and by advancing the right wing (57th Army) of the Southwestern Front from the Martovaya area to Merefa, to assist the Steppe Front in the liberation of Kharkov.

The troops of the Voronezh and Steppe fronts involved in the operation numbered over 1.1 million people, more than 12 thousand guns and mortars, 2.4 thousand tanks and self-propelled guns, 1300 combat aircraft. To support the troops of the fronts, 200 long-range aviation aircraft, part of the forces of the 17th Air Army of the Southwestern Front and aviation of the country's Air Defense Forces were allocated. The Soviet troops were opposed by the German 4th Panzer Army, the Kempf Task Force (since August 16 - the 8th Army) of the South Army Group (Field Marshal E. von Manstein) and the aircraft of the 4th Air Fleet, numbering in total complexity of about 300 thousand people, more than 3 thousand guns and mortars, up to 600 tanks and assault guns and over 1000 aircraft. As we can see, in this operation, the Soviet troops had absolute superiority over the enemy.

Before the start of the operation "Commander Rummyantsev", disinformation measures were taken, which made it possible to draw the attention of the enemy to the Sumy direction and ensure the surprise of Soviet attacks in the Belgorod region. On August 3, after a powerful artillery and aviation preparation, the shock groups of the fronts went on the offensive. At the same time, the partisans began to carry out Operation Rail War behind enemy lines. On the same day, Georgy Konstantinovich reported to Stalin:

"Today, on August 3, 1943, the troops of Chistyakov, Zhadov, Managarov, Kryuchenkon at 5.00 launched a counteroffensive, which was carried out with full regard for the experience of the Western and Bryansk fronts and was structured as follows: 5 minutes of artillery fire, mortars, Katyushas and infantry fire on the front edge and the entire depth of the enemy's defenses. 35 minutes of sight control and sighting of heavy caliber guns. 1 hour 20 minutes methodical suppression, destruction of targets and volleys of Katyushas. 20 minutes of increasing artillery and mortar fire to the limit. 45 minutes of pre-planned artillery fire on nodes of resistance in the depths of enemy defenses. The infantry with breakthrough tanks and self-propelled artillery guns was launched into the attack at 7.55, that is, at the moment the artillery opened fire increasing to the limit, and, clinging to the fire shaft, the infantry with tanks and self-propelled artillery guns broke through to the front line of the enemy's defense in 20 minutes. Aviation during the day acted according to the following plan. The first bombing strike was made on headquarters, nodes and communication lines to disrupt control. The second, third and fourth bombing strikes were successively carried out against artillery positions in the depths of the defense, against enemy concentrations and enemy reserves. The first strike of the attack aircraft was made at 7.55, that is, at the moment the infantry was rising to the attack, and continued uninterruptedly for two and a half hours with the fire task of suppressing enemy artillery, mortars and firing points on the reverse slopes.

Tank armies of Katukov and Rotmistrov, built in combat

orders in waiting positions, advanced their vanguard brigades directly behind the infantry, which ensured the rapid entry of the main forces of the tank armies into the breakthrough after breaking the tactical depth of the enemy's defense. On August 5, Soviet troops liberated

Belgorod. On the same day, in commemoration of two victories - the liberation of Orel and Belgorod - the first artillery salute in the war thundered in Moscow - 12 volleys from 124 guns. On August 6, Zhukov, the commander of the Steppe Front, Konev, and the chief

of staff of the front, Zakharov, sent I.V. Stalin their proposals for the further development of the operation "Commander Rumyantsev", which provided for the encirclement and liberation of Kharkov. In the evening of the same day, a response directive came:

"Directive of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command No. 30 160 to the representatives of the Headquarters (G.K. Zhukov and A.M. Vasilevsky. - V.D.) on the tasks and coordination of the actions of the fronts during the Belgorod-Kharkov and Donbass offensive operations

August 6, 1943 24 hours 00 min

Presented item. Yuryev (pseudonym G.K. Zhukov. - V.D.) the plan of operation "Rumyantsev" The Headquarters of the Supreme High Command approves and at the same time indicates: with the task of assisting

the main grouping of the Steppe Front in capturing Kharkov with a strike around Kharkov from the south. Establish the left border of the 57th Army by demarcation line between the Steppe and Southwestern fronts.

2. The main task of the Southwestern Front is to deliver the main blow to the south in the general direction of Golaya Dolina, Krasnoarmeiskoye and, in cooperation with the Southern Front, defeat the enemy's Donbass grouping and capture the Gorlovka, Stalino area. 3. The main task of the Southern

Front is to deliver the main blow in the general direction of Kuibyshevo, Stalino, where it will link up with the shock group of the Southwestern Front. Readiness for the offensive of the South-

Western and Southern Fronts 13-14.8.1943 Comrade. Aleksandrov (pseudonym of Vasilevsky. - V.D.) to submit the action plan of the South-Western Front and the Southern Front on August 10 for approval by the Headquarters.

4. To assign coordination of actions: between the Voronezh and Steppe fronts to comrade. Yuriev, between the Southwestern and Southern fronts on Comrade. Alexandrova.

Headquarters of the Supreme High Command
I. Stalin A. Antonov".

Stalin's quick replies and orders testified to the fact that he always knew the situation in the smallest detail and reacted accordingly to shortcomings in the operational actions of the troops. "From the position of the troops of the 5th Guards. Zhadov's army, it

is clear that the strike group of the army has been dispersed and the army divisions are operating in divergent directions, - said the directive of the General Staff of August 7, 1943, sent to the commander of the Voronezh Front and G.K. Zhukov. - Comrade Ivanov (pseudonym of I.V. Stalin. - V.D.) ordered the strike force of Zhadov's army to be compact, without dispersing its efforts in several directions. Equally, this

also applies to Katukov's 1st Panzer Army. Please let me know about the measures taken.”³⁶⁷

By the end of August 11, tank formations of the Voronezh and Steppe Fronts had advanced 100 kilometers and captured the enemy's important strongholds - the cities of Bogodukhov and Grayvoron. On August 11, the 1st Panzer Army cut the Kharkiv-Poltava railway and, together with rifle formations, captured the Kharkov enemy grouping. The troops of the Steppe Front by this time had reached the Kharkov defensive line. Events also developed successfully in the auxiliary sector of the Voronezh Front. By August 11, the troops of the 40th Army, together with the 2nd and 10th Tank Corps, captured the Boromlya and Trostyanets lines, and the 27th Army with the 4th Guards Tank Corps entered the area east of Akhtyrka. At the same time, the 5th Guards Tank Corps went south of Akhtyrka to the Kotelva area.

Field Marshal E. von Manstein, in an effort to eliminate the breakthrough of the Soviet troops, pulled up the 3rd Panzer Corps to Kharkov, which he intended to use together with the Kempf task force to strike at the eastern flank of the wedged Soviet troops. “At the same time,” writes Manstein, “the 4th Panzer Army was to attack the western flank with the forces of two tank divisions returned by the Center group and one motorized division. But it was clear that these forces and the forces of the group in general could no longer hold the front line.”³⁶⁸ On August 11, the enemy launched a counterattack on the advancing units of the Soviet troops. “The weakened units of the 1st Tank Army and

the 6th Guards Army, unable to withstand the blow, began to withdraw to more advantageous lines,” Zhukov recalled. “Then the 5th Guards Tank Army was sent to help them. A fierce battle ensued, lasting several days. Together, the enemy was stopped by the end of August 16. On August 18, the enemy launched a counterattack from the Akhtyrka region. To eliminate it, the 4th Guards Army, which arrived from the Stavka reserve, was additionally introduced into the battle. ³⁶⁹ Despite the introduction of additional forces, the enemy managed to stop the offensive of the troops of the Voronezh Front and even to push them back in some places. The hitches irritated the Supreme. At 3 a.m. on August 22, Stalin sent a directive to the

commander of the Voronezh Front, Vatutin, a copy to Zhukov: “The events of recent days have shown that you have not taken into account the experience of the past and continue to repeat old mistakes both in planning and in conducting operations.

The desire to attack everywhere and to capture as much territory as possible, without consolidating success and firmly securing the flanks of shock groups, is an offensive of an indiscriminate nature. Such an offensive leads to dispersal of forces and means and makes it possible

³⁶⁷ Op. Quoted from: Russian archive: Great Patriotic War. General Staff during the Great Patriotic War: Documents and materials. 1943 M., 1999. T. 23 (12–3). S. 243.

³⁶⁸ Manstein E. Lost Victories. S. 556.

³⁶⁹ Zhukov G.K. Memories and reflections. T. 3. S. 68–69.

the enemy to strike at the flank and rear of our groupings that have advanced far forward and are not secured from the flanks and beat them piecemeal. Under such circumstances, the enemy managed

to reach the rear of the 1st Panzer Army, located in the Alekseevka, Kovyagi area, then he hit the open flank of the formations of the 6th Guards. armies that reached the line of Otrada, Vyazovaya, Panasovka and, finally, on August 20, the enemy struck from the Akhtyrka region to the southeast, at the rear of the 27th Army, 4th and 5th Guards. tank corps.

As a result of these actions of the enemy, our troops suffered significant, unjustified losses. An advantageous position for the defeat of the Kharkov grouping of the enemy was also lost. Once again I am compelled to point out to you the unacceptable mistakes that you repeatedly repeat during operations, and I demand that the task of eliminating the Akhtyr enemy grouping, as the most important task, be completed in the coming days.

You can do this, as long as you have sufficient funds. I ask you not to scatter, not to get carried away with the task of enveloping the Kharkov bridgehead from Poltava, but to focus all your attention on the real and concrete task of eliminating the enemy's Akhtyr grouping, because without this serious successes of the Voronezh Front are impossible. I. Stalin".³⁷⁰

In the evening of the same day, a new directive was sent to Zhukov (in a copy - to the representative of the Headquarters Vasilevsky, commander of the Voronezh Front Vatutin and the Steppe Front to Konev): "The offensive plan of the Voronezh Front with the goal of capturing the city of Akhtyrka by 20.8 clearly failed. The operation to defeat the Kharkov Headquarters of the Supreme enemy grouping Command does not know what plan the Voronezh and dragged on. The High Steppe fronts are currently operating on.

The Headquarters requires you to submit a plan of operation to eliminate the enemy Akhtyrka grouping and seize the Akhtyrka-Kotelva-Kolontaev-Parkhomovka bridgehead. To do this, it is not enough to involve individual armies and corps in the matter. To do this, it is necessary to organize a breakthrough of the enemy front with the involvement of the main forces of artillery and aviation, similar to how it was organized north of Belgorod.

This operation must be timed with the breakthrough enemy defense at the junction of the Steppe and Southwestern fronts.

The management of the organization of a breakthrough on the right wing of the Southwestern Front and its interaction with the Steppe Front is entrusted to Comrade Alexandrov (a pseudonym of A.M. Vasilevsky. - V.D.), who should support with comrade Yuryev (pseudonym G.K. Zhukov. - V.D.)

connection.

The right wing of the Southwestern Front can launch an offensive on August 26–27.

Submit the plan of operation by Exodus 22.8 in order to begin

³⁷⁰ Cit. Quoted from: Russian archive: Great Patriotic War. Headquarters of the Supreme High Command: Documents and materials. 1943 T. 16 (5–3). pp. 194–195.

resettlement of the Voronezh and Steppe fronts no later than 27.8 ".³⁷¹

Zhukov and Vatutin, fulfilling Stalin's requirements, took measures to localize the breakthrough of the enemy's Akhtyr grouping: they brought the 4th Guards Army with the 3rd Guards Tank Corps and the 47th Army with the 3rd Guards Mechanized Corps into battle.

On August 23, the formations of the Steppe Front entered Kharkov, thereby completing the operation "Commander Rumyantsev", and with it the Battle of Kursk. Prerequisites were created for a general offensive, for the liberation of the Left-Bank Ukraine and access to the Dnieper. And yet the price for the transfer

of the strategic initiative into the hands of the Soviet troops was again too high. The enemy lost in the Battle of Kursk more than 500 thousand people, 3 thousand guns and mortars, over 1.5 thousand tanks and assault guns, more than 3.7 thousand aircraft. The losses of the Soviet troops amounted to: irretrievable - 254.5 thousand people, sanitary - 608.8 thousand people, that is, about one and a half times more. The report of the command of the German 2nd Panzer and 9th Armies on the battles on the Kursk Bulge notes

that their alleged offensive "inflicted heavy losses and weakened the enemy armies intended to strike from the Kursk region to the north, to such an extent that they did not have more forces to successfully complete their task of breaking through from the south in the direction of Khotynets-Karachev, given to them in the general scale of a concentric offensive against Orel. It is also indisputable that the systematic retreat carried out by both armies to the Hagen position exhausted most of the Russian advancing units and, due to the reduction of the front, freed a large number of our divisions and military units, making it possible to use them on other fronts." ³⁷² Colonel General G. Guderian more objective in his assessments: "As a result of the failure of the Citadel offensive, we suffered a decisive defeat ... The initiative completely passed to the enemy." ³⁷³ Let us give another opinion, General F.V.

von Mellenthin: "The Russian Supreme High Command led the fighting during the Battle of Kursk with great skill, skillfully withdrawing its troops and nullifying the impact of our armies with the help of a complex system of minefields and anti-tank barriers. Not content with counterattacks inside the Kursk ledge, the Russians delivered powerful blows in the area between Orel and Bryansk and achieved a significant penetration ... Operation Citadel ended in complete failure. True, the losses of the Russians were greater than the Germans; it should also be noted that from a tactical point of view, neither side was able to achieve decisive success ... After the failure of this offensive, which demanded the highest tension from the German troops, the strategic initiative passed to the Russians .

³⁷¹ Op. Quoted from: Russian archive: Great Patriotic War. Headquarters of the Supreme High Command: Documents and materials. 1943 T. 16 (5–3). S. 196.

³⁷² Op. Quoted from: Battle of Kursk. Chronicle, facts, people. Book. 2. S. 335.

³⁷³ Guderian G. Memoirs of a soldier. S. 431.

³⁷⁴ Mellenthin F.V. Tank battles: The combat use of tanks in the Second world war. M.; SPb., 2003. S. 284–285.

two years of war of the superiority of the command of the Red Army in strategic and operational art, which was personified by Marshal Zhukov. By decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR of July 29, 1943, Georgy Konstantinovich was awarded the second Order of Suvorov, first degree, for his skillful and courageous leadership of operations, for the successes achieved as a result of these operations in battles against the Nazi invaders. It is not for nothing that Zhukov, while still commanding a squadron in the twenties, studied himself and taught others to fight like Suvorov.

Chapter XI. At high steep

The war had already passed the midday mark and began to lean towards the west. By the end of the summer of 1943, Zhukov looked tired. Since the spring - endless trips along broken front roads, nightly vigils over staff maps, meetings and attacks on the front lines. Sleep in fits and starts. Limiting tension of nerves during operations. The depressing effect of the failures that happened, large and small losses, terrible pictures after the battles on the Kursk Bulge, the terrible sight of the settlements left by the enemy. A gloomy impression was made by the liberated Kharkov, or rather, the ruins that remained of it. Together with Khrushchev, we drove through the ruins, spoke at an impromptu meeting of the surviving people, hungry and exhausted. The troops were tired and exhausted, having lost too much blood in the summer battles. Zhukov felt and understood that the German tactics to bleed

the enemy in battle gradually began to develop into the strategic task of the German troops: to inflict irreparable losses on the Red Army at any cost. During the summer, Georgy Konstantinovich shared these observations more than once at Headquarters. On August 25, 1943, literally a day after the liberation of Kharkov, in the office of I.V. Stalin, a discussion of the situation and further tasks of the general offensive of all fronts took place. Zhukov was of the

opinion that the German command still had sufficient forces to continue the war, especially since England and the United States were in no hurry to launch broad offensive operations in Europe. At the same time, he believed that in the east Germany was no longer in a position to conduct a large offensive, but, apparently, would be limited to active defensive operations. Zhukov was in solidarity with the General Staff and Stalin in their desire to launch an offensive as soon as possible on all fronts in the western and southwestern directions in order to reach the eastern regions of Belarus and the Dnieper. However, he was against inflicting frontal, frontal strikes in the strip from Velikiye Luki to the Black Sea, as he preferred operations to cut off and encircle the enemy in order to completely destroy him, which would facilitate the further conduct of the war. It was precisely such an operation that Zhukov considered necessary to carry out in the Donbass. He was supported by the Deputy Chief of the General Staff, General A. I. Antonov. But Stalin did not share the point of view of Zhukov and Antonov, but impatiently demanded that the enemy be thrown back from the country's territory with frontal strikes. He believed that it would take too much time to implement Zhukov's idea and the Germans would have time to organize defense on

approaches to the

Dnieper. In accordance with the plan of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command for the summer-autumn campaign, the main blow was delivered in the southwestern direction by the troops of the Central, Voronezh, Steppe, South-Western and Southern fronts. In the south, the ground forces were to be assisted by the Azov military flotilla. At the same time, the troops of the Western and left wing of the Kalinin and Bryansk fronts received the task of advancing on the Smolensk and Bryansk-Gomel directions and thereby depriving the enemy of the opportunity to transfer forces to the south. According to the plan of the Headquarters, it was planned to deliver deep cutting blows in order to quickly reach the Dnieper, force it on the move with large forces on a wide front, and, preempting the enemy in organizing and restoring defenses on the Right Bank, seize several bridgeheads. By the beginning of the battle for the Dnieper, five fronts included 2,633 thousand people, over 51,200 guns and mortars, more than 2,400 tanks and

self-propelled guns, 2,850 combat aircraft. The Soviet troops were opposed by the 2nd army of the Center group, the 4th and 1st tank, 8th and 6th armies of the South group, in total - 1,240 thousand

people, 12,600 guns and mortars, 2,100 tanks and assault guns and 2100 combat aircraft. The German command intended to stop the offensive of the Red Army with a stubborn defense and retain the most important regions of the Left-Bank Ukraine and the Donbass. In addition, since the spring of 1943, in the deep rear, the construction of the Eastern Wall strategic defensive line was underway, the basis of which was the Dnieper River in its middle reaches and the Molochnaya River. On August 13, the troops of the Southwestern and Southern Fronts launched the Donbass offensive operation. Two weeks later, the Central, Voronezh and Steppe fronts went on the offensive - the Chernigov-Poltava strategic offensive operation

began, during which it was planned to reach the Dnieper. Having broken the fierce resistance of the enemy, the troops of three fronts advanced in the Chernigov, Kiev and Poltava-Kremenchug directions. On September 6, the Headquarters clarified the tasks of the fronts: the Voronezh Front to advance on Romny, Priluki, Kyiv, and the Stepanov Front in the Poltava-Kremenchug direction. In the last days of August, Hitler held a conference in Vinnitsa with the command of Army Group South. Field Marshal E. Manstein, referring to heavy losses, as well as the fact that the Soviet command constantly introduces new combat-ready divisions into battle, reported that the troops of the group were not able to hold the Donbass with the available forces. An even greater danger to the entire southern flank of the

Eastern Front was created on the northern flank of the group, where the 8th and 4th tank armies would not be able to hold back the onslaught of Soviet troops in the direction of the Dnieper for a long time. "I presented Hitler with a clear alternative," Manstein later noted, "either quickly allocate us new forces, at least 12 divisions, and also replace our weakened units with units from other quiet sectors of the front, or give up the Donbass in order to free up forces on the front of the group. Hitler, who conducted this meeting in a very businesslike tone, although he tried to delve, as always, into technical details, nevertheless agreed that the South group required serious support. He promised that he would give us from the fronts of the bands

"North" and "Center" are all connections that can only be taken from there. He also promised to find out in the next few days the possibility of replacing divisions weakened in battles by divisions from calmer sectors of the front. In the next few days, it became clear to us that things would not go further than these promises.³⁷⁵ Doubting that he would receive the

promised reinforcements, Manstein sent a telegram on September 7 to the headquarters of the Ground Forces outlining the situation that had developed in the Army Group South zone. "I pointed out," he recalled, "that the enemy had already committed 55 divisions and two tank corps into battle against our group, taken not from reserves, but in large part from other sectors of the Eastern Front, in addition, new units were still on the way. I once again demanded urgent cardinal measures from the OKH (headquarters of the Ground Forces. - V.D.) so that we could keep the front in the sector of our group. "³⁷⁶

Manstein's concern was finally taken up by Hitler. On September 8, he arrived at the headquarters of Army Group South in Zaporozhye, where the commander of Group A, Field Marshal von Kleist, and Colonel General Ruoff, whose 17th Army was still in the Kuban, were summoned. At this meeting, Manstein once again pointed out the seriousness of the situation: "Whether we like it or not, we will be forced to withdraw beyond the Dnieper, especially taking into account the possible consequences of an extremely tense situation on the northern flank of our group. In order to obtain the necessary forces to reinforce this flank, I suggested that the Center group be immediately withdrawn to the line of the Dnieper. As a result of this, its front would be reduced by one third, and we would save forces, which would finally allow us to concentrate sufficiently large formations of troops on the decisive sector of the Eastern Front. Hitler now agreed in principle with the need to withdraw the northern flank of the group to the Melitopol-Dnieper line, although he still hoped to avoid this by bringing new divisions of assault guns (ACS) here. As always, he thought that the use of technical means would be sufficient to stabilize the situation, which could in fact be achieved only by the introduction of a large number of new divisions into battle. With regard to the release of forces from the area of the Center group by retreating to the upper Dnieper, he stated, however, that a quick withdrawal over such a long distance was not feasible. Such a large movement of parts will supposedly drag on until the onset of mudslides. In addition, he believed that a lot of equipment would be lost (as happened during the withdrawal from the Oryol Bulge). In general, a retreat to an intermediate line further east was, in his opinion, possible, but would not give us the necessary compensation in the form of economy of forces. . , occupied by Army Group Center, nevertheless recognized the need for a strong fortification of Army Group South. Therefore, he decided that Army Group Center would immediately allocate one corps, consisting of two armored and two

³⁷⁵ Manstein E. Lost Victories. S. 561.

³⁷⁶ Ibid. S. 564.

³⁷⁷ Ibid. pp. 564–565.

infantry divisions at the junction between it and the 4th Panzer Army. This was intended to prevent the danger of enveloping the northern flank of Army Group South. In addition, Hitler agreed to Manstein's demand to bring up four more divisions to ensure crossings across the Dnieper, and also decided to leave the Kuban bridgehead, which had long since lost any operational value, in order to free up forces. Such was the position of the command of the German troops, opposing the fronts of the Red Army rushing to the Dnieper. Zhukov's point of view was clear and at the same time somewhat contradictory:

There were opportunities for careful preparation of the offensive. To Dnieper with us
Not the troops of both fronts felt great fatigue (Voronezh and
Steppe. - V.D.) from continuous logistics
battles. There were interruptions, but V support. marshal, were burning with the desire to throw away our
all of us, from soldier before land as soon as possible, to free the long-suffering Ukrainian people
an enemy from
under the heavy oppression of the occupiers, who vented their failures on the defenseless population. on

Unfortunately, the high morale of the troops cannot always compensate for miscalculations in the planning of military operations. Initially, Zhukov's application for the replenishment of the advancing fronts with human resources and military equipment was reduced by Stalin by 30–40 percent. The excessively wide zone of the offensive, which was deployed simultaneously by five fronts, the tight deadlines for fulfilling the assigned tasks inevitably forced the use of strikes and onslaughts "on the forehead." Under these conditions, enthusiasm often broke against the rampart of the enemy's impregnable defense, and then the harsh prose of military life set in. The directives of the Headquarters, which hurried to move to the west, had to be strictly implemented. And Zhukov was forced to ensure the advancement of the fronts and formations subordinate to him, to give orders that forced to move forward through the "I can't" and, with their unreasonable categoricalness and harshness, reminded him of his orders during the tragic battles near Vyazma in the winter and spring of the 42nd year. "The offensive that had begun on the fronts under my charge," admitted Georgy Konstantinovich, "developed extremely slowly."

The Headquarters of the Supreme High Command, in an effort to activate the offensive impulse of soldiers and officers, issued the following directive: "... No. 30 187 of September 9, 1943 During combat operations, the troops of the Red Army have and will have to overcome many water barriers. The rapid and decisive crossing of rivers, especially large rivers like the Desna and the Dnieper, will be of great importance for the further success of our troops.

In this regard, the Headquarters of the Supreme Commander considers it necessary to bring to the attention of the commanders of the armies, commanders of corps, divisions, brigades, regiments, pontoon and engineer battalions, that for the successful crossing of large river barriers and securing a bridgehead for the further development of the offensive, the commanders of these formations and units should be presented to the highest government awards. For crossing such a river as the Desna River in the Bogdanovo region (Smolensk region) and below, and rivers equal to the Desna in terms of forcing difficulty, submit for awards: 1. Army commanders - to the Order of Suvorov, 1st degree.

2. Commanders of corps, divisions, brigades - to the Order of Suvorov 2nd degree.
3. Commanders of regiments, commanders of engineering, sapper and pontoon battalions - to the Order of Suvorov, 3rd degree. For forcing a river such as the Dnieper River in the Smolensk region and below, and rivers equal to the Dnieper in terms of difficulty of forcing the above-mentioned commanders of formations and units to submit to the title of Hero of the Soviet Union.

The military councils of the fronts and armies within 24 hours from the moment of receipt of this directive, familiarize the commanders of the formations and units named in this directive with it. Headquarters of the Supreme High Command I. Stalin A.

Antonov."³⁷⁸ Meanwhile, Army Group Center received an order from the

command of the Wehrmacht Ground Forces to transfer four divisions to Army Group South as quickly as possible. In addition, Army Group South was promised infantry units and reinforcements from the Western Front to replenish divisions, a total of 32 battalions. On the evening of September 15, Army Group South ordered the withdrawal of all armies to the line Melitopol - Dnieper (up to the area above Kyiv) - Desna. "The enemy failed to disrupt the concentration of troops at the few crossings across the river or cut them off from these crossings," Manstein recalled. - Despite his numerical superiority, he failed to use the favorable situation created for him by the concentration of our troops to the crossings, in order to force the Dnieper with large forces away from these crossings and thereby prevent the creation of a planned defensive line on the other side of the river. The fact that he captured in several sections of the bridgehead on the opposite bank of the river, with a lack of forces on our part, could not be prevented. "³⁷⁹

During the offensive, Soviet troops achieved the greatest success in the Kiev direction. The left-flank formations of the Central Front liberated Nizhyn on September 15 and tore apart the enemy's front. The troops of the Voronezh Front also cut the German troops into separate isolated groups, which partly retreated to the Kyiv crossings, and partly to the crossings near Kanev (south of Kyiv). As a result, conditions were created for the encirclement of these groups in parts to the east of Kyiv. A particularly convenient position for this was occupied by the left-flank 60th Army of the Central Front. She did not come into contact with the enemy and was ahead of the right-flank armies of the Voronezh Front by 100-120 kilometers, which gave her the opportunity to strike south on the flank and rear of the enemy grouping, which was holding back the offensive of the right-flank 38th Army of the Voronezh Front.

But this possibility was not realized. In the second half of September, the Headquarters moved the demarcation line between the Central and Voronezh fronts to the north. As a result, Kyiv, on

³⁷⁸ Op. Quoted from: Russian archive: Great Patriotic War. Headquarters of the Supreme High Command: Documents and materials. 1943 T. 16 (5-3). S. 201.

³⁷⁹ Manstein E. Lost Victories. S. 578.

which was targeted by the 60th Army of the Central Front, withdrew to the Voronezh Front. "I considered it my duty to call Stalin," recalled the front commander Rokossovsky. - He said that he did not understand the reasons for such a change in the dividing line. He answered briefly: this was done at the insistence of comrades Zhukov and Khrushchev, they are there, they know better. This answer provided no clarity. But there was neither time nor special need to clarify."³⁸⁰

Nor will we speculate who was the real author of this decision and what considerations (hopefully operational) dictated it. In "Memoirs and Reflections" Georgy Konstantinovich does not touch on this topic.

During the offensive, Zhukov took steps to prepare in advance for crossing the Dnieper. On September 20, he reported to Stalin about this: "Today, with Nikolaev (pseudonym N.F. Vatutina. - V.D.) we worked out measures to quickly capture the crossings on the Dnieper River. For this purpose, advanced detachments have been formed from each army today, consisting of tank units, infantry mounted on vehicles, artillery and mortars. These mobile forward detachments have the task of not getting involved in battle with the covering units of the enemy, bypassing the rear guards, quickly breaking through to the crossings and trying to capture bridges and crossings ... I believe that these advanced units will approach the Dnieper River on September 22–23. On September 21, the troops of the Central Front liberated Chernigov, and formations of the 3rd Guards Tank Army of the

Voronezh Front reached the Dnieper south of Kyiv. The next day, the troops of the 13th Army of the Central Front also reached the Dnieper. They, with the support of aviation and artillery, crossed the river on the move and captured bridgeheads in the interfluvium of the Dnieper and Pripyat. At the same time, the advance detachment of the 6th Tank Corps of the 3rd Guards Tank Army of the Voronezh Front captured a bridgehead in the Veliky Bukrin area. In total, by the end of September, Soviet troops captured 23 bridgeheads on the western coast. The Dnieper airborne operation was supposed to assist the troops of the Voronezh Front in forcing the Dnieper. The plan of the operation provided for two nights to drop an

airborne assault in the Bukrinsky bend of the Dnieper to capture and hold a bridgehead at the line of Lipovy Rog, Macedonian, Shandra, Stepantsy, Kostyanets, Kanev until the front troops entered this area. The 1st, 3rd, and 5th Guards Airborne Brigades (10,000 men, 24 guns, 180 mortars), united into an airborne corps under the command of Major General I.I. Zatevakhin, were involved in the landing force. For landing, 180 Li-2 aircraft, 10 Po-2 towing aircraft and 35 gliders were allocated.

Haste does not lead to good. By the time the operation began, intelligence data about the enemy had not been rechecked, and they turned out to be outdated. The release of the first echelon of the 3rd and 5th airborne brigades was carried out on the night of September 25th. By this time, the enemy had managed to covertly transfer two infantry divisions to the area of the Bukrinsky bend of the Dnieper. Therefore, the landing was often carried out over the battle formations of the enemy, under strong anti-aircraft fire from his

³⁸⁰ Rokossovsky K. K. Soldier's duty. S. 235.

air defense. Many aircraft crews lost their bearings, dropped from high altitudes and over a vast area of 30 by 90 kilometers. As a result, part of the landing units ended up at the location of enemy troops and suffered heavy losses. Communication between the front headquarters and the brigades was lost, and further landing had to be stopped. For several days the paratroopers fought in separate groups. Only on October 5, the commander of the 5th Guards Airborne Brigade, Lieutenant Colonel P.M. Sidorchuk, managed to unite several detachments and groups in the Kanevsky Forest, and then establish contact with the front headquarters. On October 26, a brigade of about 1,200 men broke through to the southeast, into the Cherkasy forest, and established contact with the headquarters of the 52nd Army operating in this direction. On November 13, the paratroopers captured the heavily fortified strongholds of the enemy's defense and contributed to the crossing of the Dnieper by the troops of the 52nd Army of the 2nd Ukrainian Front (until October 20 - the Steppe Front. - V.D.). During the operation, the landing force lost more than 40 percent of its personnel, without reaching its goal.

Stalin, having learned about the unsuccessful use of the landing, signed a directive on October 3: "I state that the first airborne assault carried out by the Voronezh Front on September 24 failed, causing massive unnecessary casualties. This happened not only through the fault of comrade. Skripko (deputy commander of long-range aviation. - V.D.), but also through the fault of comrade. Yuryeva (pseudonym Zhukov. - V.D.) and comrade. Vatutin (commander of the Voronezh Front. - V.D.), who were supposed to control the preparation and organization of the landing.

Dropping a mass landing at night testifies to the illiteracy of the organizers of this case, because, as experience shows, dropping a mass night landing even on their own territory is fraught with great dangers. reserve of the Supreme Command.

On September 28, by decision of the Stavka, Zhukov was entrusted with coordinating the actions of the troops of the Central and Voronezh fronts to capture Kiev. The troops of the Voronezh Front (from October 20, 1943 - the 1st Ukrainian Front) twice - from October 12 to 15 and from October 21 to 23 - made desperate attempts to break through the enemy defenses. At the same time, the main blows were delivered from the southern, Bukrinsky bridgehead, and auxiliary ones from the northern, Lyutezhsky (area north of Kyiv). However, the enemy managed to concentrate large forces against the Bukrinsky bridgehead and create a solid defense here.

The tension and complexity of the current situation on the Dnieper felt in the lines of Zhukov's letters to his wife. On October 5, he writes: "Hello, Shurik. I send you

greetings and kiss you tightly. Hug and kiss Erochka and Ellochka... I am sending seeds. You still have nothing to do, even though you will gnaw them. I am sending back a warm blouse, it is very biting and it is absolutely impossible to wear it, it pricks like barbed wire.

Better get a soft sweater. Our business is still

381 Op. Quoted from: Russian archive: Great Patriotic War. Headquarters of the Supreme High Command: Documents and materials. 1943 T. 16 (5-3). S. 217.

not bad. We are sitting on the Dnieper. The Germans want to hold onto the Dnieper at all costs. But apparently they won't be able to. I still travel around the armies, I can't in a carriage - apparently, I have such a character, I'm more drawn to the field, to the troops, there I'm like a fish in water. Health is good. I can't hear well. It would be necessary to treat the ear again, but so far I can't organize it. Sometimes the head and leg aches a little. Well, that's all I wanted to write to you for now. I wish you and the guys good health. I kiss you all firmly, firmly." Another letter to Alexandra Dievna was sent on October 23:

"Hello, my dear Shurik!

I send you my regards and a big kiss. I send greetings to Erochka and Ellochka, kiss them for me. I received your letter, for which I am sending you an additional couple of hot kisses. Received a parcel with linen. Until I dropped, I laughed at the nightgown. In this shirt, I look like Matryona or Akulina. Things are going well for us at the front. True, in some areas there is a hitch, but this is perhaps inevitable after such an advance. I wanted to put an end to Kiev as soon as possible, and then I would have come to Moscow, but for now, an unfortunate delay. Health is still either good or worse. Now something is aching again. I want to come to Moscow for medical treatment. The audibility of the ear is still the same - the noises have not yet passed - apparently, with old age everything climbs out. If things go well, I think, in 8 days to be in Moscow, if the Boss allows (Stalin. - V.D.). Well, that seems to be it. And you say I don't write. See how much you scribbled. Once again, I kiss you and the guys tightly. I wish you all the best." October 24 Zhukov and the command of the 1st Ukrainian Front

reported to Stalin the reasons for the failures at the Bukrin bridgehead:

"1. Along the bridgehead south of Pereyaslav-Khmelnytsky. The results of the battles this bridgehead showed the following:

a) the terrain here is very rugged, facilitates the organization and conduct of a defensive battle and makes it difficult to conduct an offensive battle, especially the use of tanks in the offensive, since they have to move only along roads that are easily closed by anti-tank defense (anti-tank defense. - V.D.) and mines enemy. The sharply broken character of the terrain continues to the line Rzhishchev, Pik, Mizhirich.

After this line, more convenient terrain begins, allowing unhindered movement and maneuver of large tank formations. Before this milestone, it remains to break through another 6-8 km;

b) the enemy, taking into account the exceptional importance of this direction, created a grouping with a density of 5 km per division and prepared a deep, well-developed defense, consisting of several prepared lines.

On these lines, as a rule, continuous trenches, trenches of a full profile and dugouts. The enemy seeks to

prevent our breakthrough and in the depths of the defense for counterattacks has up to three hundred tanks; c) to break through such an

enemy defense, first of all, the required amount of ammunition is necessary. The penetration of the enemy's defense by our troops was carried out twice, and both times the enemy's first line of defense was broken through, each time advancing 6-8 km forward. However, both times it was not possible to develop a breakthrough due to a lack of ammunition, which was completely spent on breaking through the first line of defense.

Meanwhile, in the depths of the defense, both times our troops met the second line of defense and counterattacks of enemy tanks, for the defeat of which there was no ammunition left. There is a particularly acute shortage of 120-mm mines, 122-mm howitzer shells and 152-mm - 37, which are necessary in rough terrain and without which it is impossible to break through the defense; d) now the question arises, should we continue the

breakthrough on the bridgehead south of Pereyaslav-Khmel'nitsky, or stop the offensive here and regroup the troops to another, more advantageous bridgehead?

It will take a lot of time to regroup troops to another bridgehead. This could be done if a breakthrough had already been made on other bridgeheads, which has not yet been achieved. Considering that at a depth of 5-6 km of the enemy's defense we will reach

a more accessible flat terrain and get the opportunity to develop success and maneuver, we consider it expedient now not to abandon the production of a breakthrough in this direction, but, on the contrary, to prepare this breakthrough more carefully, to accumulate the required amount of ammunition, regroup forces and re-break through ...

2. Along the bridgeheads north of Kiev: there is a full opportunity to get success here, but there are not enough forces for this, for this purpose it is necessary to give the front one combined arms army and one tank army ... "382 Stalin's explanations were not satisfied: "The Headquarters of the

Supreme High Command indicates that the failure of the offensive on the Bukrinsky bridgehead occurred because the conditions of the terrain were not taken into account in a timely manner, which hindered the offensive operations of the troops here, especially the tank army.

The reference to the lack of ammunition is not solid, since Stepin (pseudonym I.S. Konev. - V.D.), having no more ammunition than Nikolaev (pseudonym N.F. Vatutin. - V.D.), but correctly using his troops and acting on somewhat more favorable terrain, he successfully fulfills his task. "383

Stalin ordered the troops of the 1st Ukrainian Front to be regrouped and the right wing of the front to be reinforced, primarily in the area of the Lyutezhsky bridgehead. To do this, it was necessary to transfer Rybalko's 3rd Guards Tank Army, an artillery corps, three or four rifle divisions and other formations to the area north of Kyiv. The transfer of troops had to be carried out covertly in order to keep the enemy in the dark about changes in the direction of the main attack. At the same time, the right wing of the 1st Ukrainian Front was reinforced by two divisions from the 30th Army of the Stavka reserve

and two divisions transferred from the 61st Army of the Belorussian Front (formerly Central. - V.D.). On October 25, under the personal control of Zhukov, the transfer of troops from the Bukrinsky bridgehead to the Lyutezhsky began. Along a section of the front more than 200

kilometers long, sappers built a temporary road, along the ruts and potholes of which, for a week, without closing his eyes, he dangled

382 Ibid. pp. 321-322.

383 Ibid. S. 227.

George Konstantinovich. The strictest measures of camouflage and secrecy were taken. Everything was done in order to give the enemy the impression that the main blow would be delivered from the Bukrinsky bridgehead. In the meantime, the 38th Army under the command of General K.S. Moskalenko, the 3rd Guards Tank Army of General P.S. Rybalko, the 5th Guards Tank Corps of General A.G. Kravchenko, and the breakthrough artillery corps were concentrated on the Lyutezh bridgehead. The artillery units concentrated here had a total of about two thousand guns and mortars, five hundred rocket launchers

"Katyusha".

Stalin demanded that Kiev be captured no later than November 5-6, because the 26th anniversary of the Great October Revolution was ahead. "In solving this problem," the Stavka directive stressed, "to make sacrifices, bearing in mind that these sacrifices will be many times less than those that will have to be spent if this operation is delayed."³⁸⁴

On October 30, Zhukov informed Stalin: "Once again I checked the plan of operation for the armies of Nikolaev (pseudonym N.F. Vatutin. - V.D.) and after the amendments I made, I consider it completely finished. He visited Moskalenko, where at a briefing meeting he gave practical instructions to the commanders of the division and corps on the preparation and conduct of the upcoming operation. We are preparing an offensive from the Bukrinsky bridgehead for 11/1/43. On the day mentioned, a diversionary offensive of the 40th and 27th armies began from here. The German command considered that the main blow was being dealt here, and began to transfer additional forces here, including an SS Panzer Division. In total, our troops managed to pin down up to ten enemy divisions on this sector of the front.

On the morning of November 3, after a powerful artillery preparation, the main grouping of the 1st Ukrainian Front struck from the Lutezhsky bridgehead. By the end of the day, the troops of the 38th Army, advancing together with the 5th Guards Tank Corps, and the formations of the 60th Army advanced 5-12 kilometers. On November 4-5, the 3rd Guards Tank Army, cutting off the Kyiv-Zhitomir highway, the 1st Guards Cavalry Corps, the second echelons of the 38th and 60th armies were brought into battle. The enemy, fearing the encirclement of his troops in Kyiv, began to withdraw them. By the morning of November 6, Kyiv was liberated. On November 7, Soviet troops occupied Fastov, on November 12 - Zhytomyr. "After heavy fighting," Manstein complained, "Kyiv was abandoned, since the 7th ak (army corps. - V.D.) operating here was under the

threat of encirclement in the city. The corps was thrown back from Kiev to the south, and he managed to delay the advance of the enemy only 50 kilometers below the city. 385 "With great joy we report to you that," Zhukov and Vatutin informed Stalin, Kiev - the capital of Ukraine - was completed by the troops of the 1st Ukrainian Front. Kiev is completely cleared of the

German occupiers."³⁸⁶ On the same day, Moscow saluted the troops of the 1st

³⁸⁴ Ibid. S. 230.

³⁸⁵ Manstein E. Lost Victories. S. 596.

³⁸⁶ Op. Quoted from: Krasnov V. G. Unknown Zhukov. S. 412.

Ukrainian front. Later,

Zhukov recalled: "At 9 o'clock in the morning, together with the military council of the front, we arrived in Kyiv, where crowds of exhausted residents of the city were already flocking, hiding in the vicinity from the brutal massacre of the Nazis. Our cars will surround us from all sides... Many wept for joy, everyone wanted to tell something about something that had long been sore and hard-won... Driving along Khreshchatyk, which I knew well, once the most beautiful avenue of the city, I could not find out anything: there were solid ruins all around. This is how our ancient Kiev looked like after the departure of the Nazis."³⁸⁷ By mid-November 1943, the troops of the 1st Ukrainian Front

had penetrated deeply into the enemy's defenses at the junction of Army Groups Center and South, reached the line of Chernobyl, Malin, Zhitomir, Fastov. The flocks created a strategic foothold on the right bank of the Dnieper up to 230 kilometers along the front and up to 145 kilometers in depth. Under these conditions, the German command decided to regain the initiative and restore the defense along the Dnieper, abandoning the previously planned strike in the lower reaches of the Dnieper. In the areas south-west of Fastov and south of Zhytomyr, a grouping consisting of the 48th tank, 13th army corps and the Matgenklot task force was concentrated, which had the task of capturing Kiev and eliminating the bridgehead of Soviet troops on the right bank of the Dnieper. The headquarters of the Supreme High Command, having established the concentration of the enemy tank grouping south and south-west of Fastov, suspended the offensive

of the 1st Ukrainian Front in the Kazatinsky direction. The 38th (Colonel General K.S. Moskalenko) and the 3rd Guards Tank (Lieutenant General of the Tank Forces P.S. Rybalko) armies went on the defensive. The offensive continued on the right wing of the front by the forces of the 13th (Lieutenant General N.P. Pukhov) and 60th (Lieutenant General I.D. Chernyakhovsky) armies.

On November 15, the enemy strike force launched a counteroffensive. The main blows were delivered from the area southwest of Fastov to Brusilov and from the area south of Chernyakhov to Radomyshl. The troops of the 38th Army, which was defending in the Zhytomyr-Fastov sector, were forced to withdraw to the north under the blows of superior enemy forces. On November 17, German units reached the Zhytomyr-Kiev highway and launched

an offensive against Kyiv along it. The next day, the enemy managed to encircle a group of troops of the 60th Army in the Zhitomir region with strikes from the north, south and east. After two days of fierce fighting, most of them broke out of the encirclement, leaving the city.

On November 23, German troops captured Brusilov. The 3rd Guards Tank Army was transferred to the area north and east of the city and the 94th Rifle Corps of the 1st Guards Army was advanced. The forces of the 40th and 27th armies strengthened the defenses in the Fastov-Trypillia sector. The 2nd Air Army acted against the advancing enemy tanks and infantry. On November 26, the command of the 1st

Ukrainian Front managed to launch a counterattack on the northern flank of the Brusilov grouping of the enemy and

³⁸⁷ Zhukov G.K. Memories and reflections. T. 3. S. 85–86.

stabilize the situation. The stubborn defense and active operations of the Soviet troops in the Brusilov region played a decisive role in disrupting the enemy's counteroffensive against Kyiv. In December, the German 4th Panzer Army twice tried to break through to Kyiv in the zone of the 60th Army, but both of its attempts were repulsed. As a result of almost a month and a half of fighting, the enemy advanced 35-40 kilometers in the Kiev direction, but his strike force was exhausted and bled dry.

Assessing the results of the Kyiv defensive operation, Zhukov wrote: "In the second half of November, the enemy, as I said, having captured Zhitomir, repeatedly tried to overturn the formations of the 1st Ukrainian Front and break through to Kiev. But these persistent attempts were not crowned with success. Moreover, as a result of their reckless actions, the German troops suffered colossal losses, which in individual divisions reached 60-70 percent of the personnel and materiel. As a result of the exhaustion of forces and means, the Nazi command stopped the offensive, going on the defensive, but still did not give up its intention to recapture Kyiv and reach the Dnieper. 388

Field Marshal E. von Manstein reported to the command of the Ground Forces: "The moment to save the situation on the northern flank of the army group through private measures, such as the transfer of individual divisions, has been lost."389 During the Kiev defensive operation, Zhukov almost all

the time worked in the headquarters and troops of the 1st Ukrainian Front. On a call from Stalin, from December 4 to 12, he was in Moscow, where he took part in an expanded meeting of the State Defense Committee. It discussed international issues and the possibility of opening a second front in Europe, the problems of the economy and the military industry, the results and experience of military operations on the fronts, and the prospects for war. In the winter campaign of 1944, it was decided to launch an offensive from Leningrad to the Crimea. At the same time, the main operations were planned to be carried out in the South-Western theater of operations.

As soon as Georgy Konstantinovich had time to return to the front, Stalin demanded that Vatutin explain the reasons for the loss by the troops of the front of the Radomyshl bridgehead on the western bank of the Teterev River. The report of the Commander of the 1st Ukrainian Front did not satisfy the Supreme Commander. In a directive dated December 14, Stalin noted: "The command of the 1st Ukrainian Front, despite the presence of superior forces in the front, doomed the front to passivity due to the armchair method of leading the troops of the front. Such an intolerable situation led to the fact that the enemy was able to freely maneuver along the entire front with one group of tanks available to him. The Headquarters warns that if such mistakes are still made in commanding the troops of the front, strict measures will be taken against the command of the front."390 By Stalin's decision, Colonel-General V.I.

388 Ibid. S. 98.

389 Manstein E. Lost Victories. S. 608.

390 Op. Quoted from: Russian archive: Great Patriotic War. Headquarters of the Supreme High Command: Documents and materials. 1943 T. 16 (5-3). S. 247.

positions, and Colonel-General A.A. Grechko was appointed instead. The directive did not contain any reproaches against the Stavka representative Zhukov, but they were clearly visible.

Due to the fact that the German 4th Panzer Army was a thorn in the path of the troops of the 1st Ukrainian Front, the Headquarters demanded an operation to defeat it. Zhukov not only took part in the Zhitomir-Berdichev planning of the offensive operation, but also, Novikov, coordinated the interaction of the 1st and together with Air Marshal A. A. 2nd Ukrainian fronts. By the beginning of this operation, the troops of the 1st Ukrainian Front numbered 831 thousand people, about 11,400 guns and mortars, 1,125 tanks and self-propelled

guns, 529 aircraft. They were opposed by the German 4th Panzer Army of Army Group South, which had 574 thousand people, 6960 guns and mortars, 1200 tanks and assault guns. They were supported by 500 aircraft of the 4th Air Fleet. According to the plan of our command, the main blow was inflicted in the center of the front line on Radomyshl, Zhitomir, Berdichev, Zhmerinka. Auxiliary blows were delivered by the troops of the right wing on Korosten, Sarny, Novograd-Volynsky, Lyubar, part of the forces - bypassing Zhitomir from the west. The troops of the left wing of the front were to advance on Belaya Tserkov, Khristinovka and, in cooperation with the right wing of the 2nd Ukrainian Front, defeat the enemy south of Kyiv.

On December 24, 1943, after artillery preparation of the troops of the shock group of the front - 1st Guards (Colonel General A.A. Grechko), 18th (Colonel General K.N. Leselidze), 38th (Colonel General K.S. . Moskalenko) of the army, with the support of the 2nd Air Army (Lieutenant General of Aviation S. A. Krasovsky), went on the offensive and on the same day broke through the tactical defense zone of the enemy. The 3rd Guards (Lieutenant General, from December 30, 1943 - Colonel General P.S. Rybalko) and the 1st Tank Army (Lieutenant General of the Tank Forces M.E. Katukov) introduced into the breakthrough began to develop the success of combined arms connections. On December 25–28, the 13th (Lieutenant General N.P. Pukhov), 60th (Lieutenant General I.D. Chernyakhovsky), 40th (Lieutenant General F.F. Zhmachenko) and 27th I (Lieutenant General S.G. Trofimenko) of the army. By December 30, the troops of the front expanded the breakthrough to 300 kilometers and advanced to a depth of 100 kilometers. On December 31, 1944, they liberated Zhitomir, on January 3, 1944, Novograd Volynsky, on January 4, Bila Tserkva, on January 5, Berdichev.

Trying to eliminate the breakthrough, the enemy transferred 16 divisions and large aviation forces to the zone of the 1st Ukrainian Front. On January 11-12, German troops launched counterattacks in the areas of Zhmerinka and Khristinovka, and then in other directions. On January 15, at the direction of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command, the troops of the 1st Ukrainian Front went on the defensive.

As a result of the Zhytomyr-Berdichev operation, Soviet troops defeated six enemy divisions, advanced in a strip 700 kilometers wide to a depth of 80–200 kilometers west of the Dnieper, hanging from the north over the entire Nazi group operating in Right-Bank Ukraine. The Kiev and Zhytomyr regions and a number of districts of the Vinnitsa and Rivne regions were almost completely liberated. Meanwhile, Konev's 2nd Ukrainian Front was completing

Kirovograd operation, the final goal of which was access to the Southern Bug. During the operation, it was supposed to bypass Kirovograd from the northwest and southwest, encircle and destroy the enemy's Kirovograd grouping. At the same time, an auxiliary strike was launched on the right wing of the front.

On January 5, 1944, the troops of the front, with the support of the 5th Air Army, went on the offensive. On the first day, they achieved the greatest success north of Kirovograd, advancing in some areas up to 24 kilometers. By the morning of January 7, the front's mobile formations bypassed Kirovograd from the northwest, cutting off the enemy's main withdrawal routes. The next day, the troops of the front liberated the city and then, pursuing the defeated enemy units, advanced 15-20 kilometers to the west and south-west. On the direction of the auxiliary strike, the troops of the 52nd and 4th Guards Armies advanced up to 40 kilometers by January 10, but were then stopped by strong enemy counterattacks, which transferred three tank divisions to this direction.

As a result of the operation, the troops of the 2nd Ukrainian Front, having defeated the Kirovograd grouping of German troops, advanced westward up to 40-50 kilometers. Conditions arose in order to encircle and defeat the Korsun-Shevchenko enemy grouping, which was part of the forces of the 1st Panzer Army and the 8th Army of the South Group, together with the 1st Ukrainian Front. Holding and gaining a foothold in the middle reaches of the Dnieper in the Kanev

region, in the so-called Korsun-Shevchenko ledge, the German troops had long hung over the adjacent flanks of the 1st and 2nd Ukrainian fronts, restricting their freedom of maneuver. The German command expected to use this area as a springboard for a large-scale offensive in order to restore the front line along the western bank of the Dnieper. Field Marshal E. von Manstein wrote: "We decided to first concentrate all the forces at our disposal to strike at the enemy advancing through the gap between the 1st and 4th tank armies to the south. This gap was especially dangerous because the enemy's breakthrough in the direction of Uman forced the 1st Panzer Army to bend its western flank in the area southwest of Kyiv to the south. It now came into contact with its rear positions with the rear positions of the 8th Army located in the Dnieper salient. Since the inner flanks of both armies still held the Dnieper on either side of Kanev, the German positions formed, so to speak, a bag, which was tied up in the north near the Dnieper, while its longitudinal sides were the fronts of both armies facing east and west. . If the enemy had succeeded in using the gap north of Uman, it would have been easy for him to "pull" this bag in the south! The wisest thing would be, of course, to leave it, since it would be pointless to spend a lot of effort on its defense. But even here, Hitler did not want to voluntarily cede the coast of the Dnieper. He still hoped to strike from this bulge of the front in order to someday again take possession of the eastern part of the arc. Therefore, this ledge remained. After a short time, this "bag" turned into a Cherkasy cauldron."³⁹¹

³⁹¹ Manstein E. Lost Victories. S. 619.

In order to translate his plan into reality, Manstein planned to strike at the Soviet troops advancing deep into the gap between the 4th and 1st tank armies, from three sides - from the east, west and south.

On January 11, Zhukov reported to Stalin a plan for cutting off, encircling and defeating the entire Korsun-Shevchenko enemy grouping. The next day, the Headquarters directive was signed to defeat the enemy in the Zvenigorod-Mironovo ledge:

"The enemy grouping, which continues to remain in the area of Zvenigorodka, Mironovka, Smela, connects the actions of the adjacent flanks of the 1st and 2nd Ukrainian fronts and delays their advance to the river. Southern Bug.

The offensive of the main groupings of both fronts is developing along parallel lines, and no decisive measures are taken to eliminate the remaining enemy salient. circumstance, the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command sets the 1st and 2nd Ukrainian Fronts the immediate task of encircling and

Considering This destroying the enemy grouping in the Zvenigorod-Mironovo ledge by closing the left-flank units of the 1st Ukrainian Front and the right-flank units of the 2nd Ukrainian Front somewhere in Shpola area, because only such a combination of troops of the 1st and 2nd Ukrainian fronts will give them the opportunity to develop a strike to reach the river. Southern Bug.³⁹² By the beginning of the operation, superiority over the enemy in infantry was 1.7 times, artillery - 2.4 times, tanks and self-propelled guns - 2.7 times. In terms of aviation, the forces of the parties were approximately equal. On the axes of the main attacks, as a result of the regroupings carried out, a more significant superiority over the enemy was achieved: on the 1st Ukrainian Front - almost two times in infantry and three times in tanks and artillery; on the

2nd Ukrainian Front - more than three times for infantry, six times for artillery and ten times for tanks. The operation was prepared in a difficult environment. It was especially difficult for the 1st Ukrainian Front, whose troops at that time repelled fierce enemy attacks in the area north of Uman and east of Vinnitsa. The early thaw and thaw impeded the maneuvers of troops, the supply of materiel, and the use of unpaved airfields by aviation. The 1st Ukrainian Front was supposed to launch an offensive on January 26, the 2nd Ukrainian - a day earlier. This was due to the difference in the distances that the shock groupings of the fronts had to overcome to Zvenigorodka, the point where they were supposed to link up. In fact, the offensive of the 2nd Ukrainian Front began on January 24 with the actions of advanced battalions, which by the end of the day wedged into the enemy

defenses to a depth of 6 kilometers. On January 25, following them, the main forces of the 4th Guards and 53rd Armies were introduced into the battle, and in the afternoon, the 5th Guards Tank Army. They expanded the breakthrough to 25 kilometers along the front and up to 16 kilometers in depth. On January 26, the shock grouping of the 1st

³⁹² Op. Quoted from: Russian archive: Great Patriotic War. Supreme Command Headquarters: Documents and materials. 1944–1945 T. 16 (5–4). S. 31.

Ukrainian front, but it moved slowly. The enemy, trying to eliminate the breakthrough, launched several counterattacks on the flanks of the strike force of the 2nd Ukrainian Front (three tank divisions from the south, one tank and three infantry divisions from the north) in the general direction of Kapitanovka, but they were repelled. On January 28, the troops of both fronts united in the Zvenigorodka area, completing the encirclement of the Korsun-Shevchenko enemy grouping (up to 50 thousand people). The German command was forced to stop counterattacks against the troops of the 1st Ukrainian Front east of Vinnitsa and north of Uman, and all tank divisions were transferred to rescue the encircled troops. Zhukov was well aware that the enemy would try to organize a strike from the outside, so he used the tank armies of both fronts, reinforced by rifle formations, anti-tank artillery and engineer units, to create an external front of encirclement. At the

same time, the combined arms armies (27th, 4th Guards) and the 5th Guards Cavalry Corps formed a continuous internal encirclement front. Aviation provided great assistance to the advancing troops, having made 2,800 sorties from January 29 to February 3. After encircling the enemy, the 2nd Air Army (Lieutenant General of Aviation, from February 4 - Colonel General of Aviation S.A. Krasovsky), together with the 10th Air Defense Fighter Aviation Corps of the country, carried out an air blockade of the group, and the 5th Air Army (Lieutenant General of Aviation S.K. Goryunov) supported the troops operating on the outer front of the encirclement. Multiple counterattacks undertaken by the enemy in order to break through to the encircled grouping were repulsed. This was largely facilitated by the measures taken by the Soviet command to strengthen the outer front of the encirclement with rifle divisions, large artillery forces and the 2nd Tank Army (Lieutenant General of the Tank Forces S.I. Bogdanov), transferred from Vinnitsa. Reflecting enemy counterattacks on the outer front, the troops of the 1st and 2nd Ukrainian Fronts continued to simultaneously fight to eliminate the encircled grouping.

On February 9, Zhukov reported to I.V. Stalin: "...

According to the testimony of the prisoners, during the period of fighting in the encirclement, the enemy troops suffered heavy losses. At present, confusion is felt among the soldiers and officers, reaching in some cases to
panic.

According to Korsun-Shevchenkivskiy. Apparently, the enemy was preparing for the last attempt to break through to meet the tank group advancing on M. Boyarka. To ensure this direction, by the morning of February 9, we withdraw one tank brigade from Rotmistrov (commander of the 5th Guards Tank Army. - V.D.) to the Lisianska area and the 340th Infantry Division to the Krasnogorodka-Motaevka area ... February 8 at 15.50 our parliamentarians through Colonel Fukke, commander of the Steblevsky combat sector,

they delivered an ultimatum to the encircled enemy ... "393 The ultimatum was signed by Deputy Supreme Commander-in-Chief Marshal Zhukov, commanders of the fronts, army generals Vatutin and

393 Op. Quoted from: Krasnov V.G. Unknown Zhukov. pp. 414-415.

Konev. The enemy rejected the ultimatum. Immediately on the inner front of the encirclement and from the side of the outer front, German troops began fierce attacks. But all was in vain. In these tense days, Georgy

Konstantinovich found several minutes to write a letter home:

"Acting army. 10.2.44 My dear! I

send you my

regards. I kiss you firmly, alone, and especially with the guys. Thank you for the letter, for the cabbage, lingonberries and everything else. Our affairs are going, in general, well. All the tasks planned by the army are being carried out well. In general, Hitler's affairs are clearly heading towards complete failure, while our country is heading towards unconditional victory, towards the triumph of Russian weapons. In general, the front is coping with its tasks, things are now behind the rear, the rear must work very hard to meet the needs of the front, the rear must study well, be morally strong, then the Russians will surely win. Kiss you hard, kiss you hard. Your G. Zhukov. But it was still too early to say that all the tasks planned

by the army were being carried out successfully.

On February 11, the command of Army Group South, with up to eight tank divisions, launched a major offensive on the outer front of the encirclement, striking at Lisyanka from the areas west of Rizino and Yerka. Parts of the encircled group rushed towards them. At the cost of heavy losses, the enemy, advancing from the Rizino region, managed to reach the Lisyanka region. On the night of February 12, Zhukov sent a report to Headquarters: "At Kravchenko (6th Panzer Army. - V.D.): - the enemy with a force of up to 160 tanks with motorized infantry from the front of Rizino -

Chemeriskoye - Tarasovka is attacking in the general direction of Lisyanka and, having broken through the first line

of the 47th Rifle Corps, wedged into the defense up to 10 km. Further advance of the enemy was stopped on the river Gnilyoy Tkich by units of the 340th Rifle Division and the 5th Mechanized Corps, which constituted the second line of defense, and reserve regiments of SU-85.

Due to the lack of communication with the commander of the 47th Rifle Corps, the situation on the left flank of the army in the direction of Zhabinka - Rizino - Dubrovka is being specified. Kravchenko had enough forces and means to repel enemy attacks, but

Kravchenko, when breaking through the first line of our defense, lost control of army units.

He ordered Nikolaev (pseudonym N.F. Vatutina. - V.D.) to urgently deploy the control of the 27th Army to Dzhurzhentsy and subordinate Kravchenko to Trofimenko (27th Army. - V.D.) operationally.

Bogdanov's army (2nd tank army. - V.D.) by the morning of February 12, concentrate the main forces in the Lisyanka - Dashukovka - Chesnovka area. Deploy the 202nd Rifle Division at the Khizhintsy-Dzhurzhentsy line, and pull up the fully equipped Katukov brigade (1st Guards Tank Army. - V.D.) there. Stepin (pseudonym I.S. Konev. - V.D.) ordered in Lisyanka by morning to have two brigades from

Rotmistrov and along the Rotten Tkich River in the area

Lisyanka - Murzinda to take up defense, and first of all anti-tank. At Stepin: - Rotmistrov's army today repelled attacks of

up to 60 enemy tanks from Yerkov in the direction of Zvenigorodka. Intelligence established the movement of up to 40 tanks from Kapustin to Yerki. It is possible that the enemy is pulling up tanks from the Lebedinsky direction to the Zvenigorod direction.

Stepin, by the morning of February 12, the 18th Tank Corps moves to Mikhailovka (east of Zvenigorodka) and the 29th Tank Corps to the Knyazhie-Lozovatka area. Smirnov's army (4th

Guards Army. - V.D.) fought for Miropolye, Koshak, Glushki. For the convenience of control from 12.00 February

12, the 180th Rifle

Trofimenko's division is transferred to the 2nd Ukrainian Front.

On 12.2.44, he ordered Stepin to strike with the main forces of the armies of Koroteev (52nd Army. - V.D.) and Smirnov from the east to Steblev and to the rear of the main grouping of the encircled enemy, which was preparing to go out to meet the advancing tank group.

All night aviation of the fronts operates in the Steblev area.

Zhukov.394

On February 12, with blows from the inside of the ring, the enemy managed to push back the Soviet troops and reach the Shenderovka area. There was a real threat of deblockade of the encircled German troops.

On that day, Zhukov fell ill with the flu and went to bed with a high fever. Some time later (Zhukov writes that he does not know how long he slept) Stalin called. He said that Konev called and reported: at Vatutin, the enemy broke through at night from the Shenderovka region to Kiliya and Novaya Buda. Zhukov replied that he knew nothing about it. Stalin demanded to check. Zhukov immediately contacted Vatutin, commander of the 1st

Ukrainian Front. Indeed, the enemy tried, using a blizzard, to escape from the encirclement and even managed to advance two or three kilometers, but was stopped. Zhukov again called the Supreme and reported to him the information received from Vatutin. But Stalin had already matured other considerations. He said that Konev was asking to be given command of the troops of the internal front to liquidate the Korsun-Shevchenko group of the enemy, and that the leadership of the troops on the external front be concentrated in the hands of Vatutin. Zhukov considered this inappropriate. I. S. Konev, recalling this episode, noted that Georgy Konstantinovich in his "Memoirs and Reflections" did not cover this issue quite accurately. "I persistently avoided subordinating the 27th

Army to me also because," writes Konev, "that when the plan for interaction between the fronts is violated, the reassignment of troops is seriously complicated. I was genuinely worried about the outcome of the battle. After all, the transfer of the army to me did not increase its strength ... Everyone will understand that in such a difficult situation it is hardly advisable to ask for the reassignment of troops yourself, without knowing thoroughly the situation in the neighbor's sector. In fact

On February 12, 1944, on HF, Stalin, placing responsibility for the liquidation of the encircled grouping on me, himself insisted on subordinating the 27th Army of the 1st Ukrainian Front to me. I, having stated my motives, persistently refused to do so.”³⁹⁵

After a conversation with Konev, Stalin, dissatisfied with the enemy's breakthrough, sent on February 12 at 4:45 pm Zhukov a very unpleasant directive for the content No.

direction of Shenderovka occurred because:

firstly, despite my personal instructions, you did not have a well-thought-out general plan for the destruction of the Korsun grouping of Germans by the joint efforts of the 1st and 2nd Ukrainian fronts;

secondly, the 27th Army, weak in composition, was not strengthened in a timely

manner; thirdly, decisive measures were not taken to fulfill my instructions to destroy the stem ledge in the first place, from where attempts to break through it could most likely be expected.

I must point out to you that I have entrusted you with the task of coordinating the actions of the 1st and 2nd Ukrainian Fronts, and meanwhile, from your report today, it is clear that, despite the severity of the situation, you are not sufficiently aware of the situation: you do not know about the occupation the enemy of Khilek and Novo-Buda; You do not know Konev's decision to use the 5th Guards. kk (cavalry corps. - V.D.) and Rotmistrov's tank corps in order to destroy the enemy breaking through to Shenderovka. The forces and means on the left wing of the 1st Ukrainian Front and on the right wing of the 2nd Ukrainian

Front are sufficient to eliminate the enemy's breakthrough and destroy his Korsun grouping. I demand from you that you devote your main attention to the fulfillment of this task.”³⁹⁶

Less than three hours later, a new Stavka directive No. 220 022 followed: “In view of the fact

that in order to eliminate the enemy's Korsun grouping, it is necessary to combine the efforts of all troops operating with this task, and since most of these troops belong to the 2nd Ukrainian Front, The Headquarters of the Supreme High Command orders:

1. Assign the leadership of all troops operating against the Korsun grouping of the enemy to the commander of the 2nd Ukrainian Front (Konev. - V.D.) with the task of destroying the Korsun grouping of Germans as soon as possible ...

2. Tov. Release Yuriev from monitoring the liquidation of the Korsun grouping of Germans and entrust him with coordinating the actions of the troops of the 1st and 2nd Ukrainian fronts with the task of preventing the enemy from breaking through from Lisyanka and Zvenigorodka to connect with the Korsun grouping of the enemy ... ”³⁹⁷

³⁹⁵ Konev I.S. Notes of the front commander. S. 196.

³⁹⁶ Op. Quoted from: Russian archive: Great Patriotic War. Supreme Command Headquarters: Documents and materials. 1944–1945 T. 16 (5–4). pp. 41–42.

³⁹⁷ Ibid. S. 42.

Having received directive No. 220 022, Vatutin called Zhukov, believing that Georgy Konstantinovich was the initiator of this decision. But after all, Zhukov knows that he, Vatutin, without closing his eyes for several days in a row, strained all his strength to carry out the Korsun Shevchenko operation. And it is not clear to him: why is he being removed now and not allowed to complete this operation?

"I couldn't tell
N.F. Vatutin, Zhukov writes, whose proposal was this, that in this case Not
push him With I.S. Konev. However I I thought that V combat, it is quite
N.F. Vatutin is right as a commander, taking care of the well- O
deserved glory of the troops entrusted to him 398 Therefore, Zhukov replied to
Vatutin that this was an order from the Supreme Commander, which should be
unconditionally carried out. Vatutin offensively rapped out that the order would be carried out.

Resolving the issue with Vatutin, Zhukov himself felt, probably, no better than Nikolai Fedorovich. After all, in the last two directives of Stalin, as well as in several other previous orders, one could see not only dissatisfaction (even before the Supreme Commander did not hide it with any failure) with the actions of Georgy Konstantinovich, but also obvious irritation bordering on distrust. What was the reason for this? Perhaps there really were some intrigues that penetrated the Stavka from the outside. Perhaps the individual and inevitable failures in the war on the fronts under Zhukov's wards thus influenced the Supreme. Or maybe Stalin began to prepare for a redistribution of roles on the eve of the victorious end of the war ... Let's not guess, because any answer may turn out to be just a version that is too far from the truth. In any case, in such situations, Zhukov never lowered himself to a showdown, he perceived everything with dignity and outwardly calmly, as befits a soldier. On February 14, troops of the 52nd Army of the 2nd Ukrainian Front occupied Korsun-Shevchenkivskyi. On the night of February 17, the enemy made a desperate attempt to break out of the encirclement in the direction of Lisiansk. Field Marshal Manstein talks about this as follows: "By order of the command of the army group, both encircled corps (42nd and 11th army corps. - V.D.) were to use all artillery

and available ammunition to ensure a way out of the encirclement. Since during the exit from the encirclement the troops would have to move through impassability and deep mud, it was ordered to abandon the guns after all the ammunition was shot. The rear guards with several guns covered the troops emerging from the encirclement from enemy attacks from the north, east and south ... At 0125 hours on the night of February 16-17, joyful news came that the first contact between the corps emerging from the encirclement and advanced units 3 shopping mall (tank corps. - V.D.) installed. The enemy, who was between them, was literally crushed. On February 28, we learned that 30,000-32,000 people had come out of the cauldron. Since it contained 6 divisions and one brigade, given the low number of troops, this accounted for most of the active bayonets. 399

Zhukov's testimonies disagree with this information: "All morning 17

398 Zhukov G.K. Memories and reflections. T. 3. S. 113.

399 Manstein E. Lost Victories. S. 628.

February was a fierce battle to destroy the broken columns of German troops, which were mostly destroyed and captured. Only a few tanks and armored personnel carriers with generals, officers and SS men managed to break out of the encirclement and slip from the area of the village of Pochapintsy to the Lisyanka area ... As we expected, on February 17, everything was finished with the encircled group. According to the data of the 2nd Ukrainian Front, 18,000 people and military equipment of this grouping were taken prisoner.”⁴⁰⁰ I.S. 41st divisions, which occupied positions along the banks of the Gorny Tikich River on the outer front of the encirclement. They reported that not

a single German soldier passed through their lines. I also spoke with army commanders Smirnov, Trofimenko, Rotmistrov, Galanin, closely followed their actions, reports and reports, and not a single report or report said that the Germans had passed through any point or line of our troops occupying defense as on 401 K. Tippelskirch in his book “History of the Second World War” wrote the following about these events: “When the offensive force of the deblocking troops was exhausted by February 15, the surrounded they were to be attacked by the tank corps of the 1st tank army. A brilliantly prepared breakthrough on the night of February 16-17, however, did not lead to a connection with the advancing corps, since the advance of the latter, already slow due to the poor state of the pound, was stopped by the enemy ... In the end, these battles

again brought heavy losses in manpower and equipment, which further complicated the situation on the overly extended German fronts.⁴⁰² Obviously, when several opinions differ, the truth must be sought somewhere in the middle. The fourth volume of the "Military Encyclopedia" (article "Korsun-Shevchenkivskyi operation") says that about 20 thousand people who abandoned heavy weapons and vehicles leaked in small groups under the cover of heavy snowfall. The problem of reliable isolation of the encircled grouping and its subsequent destruction was only partially solved. Its losses (together with the losses of troops operating on the outer front of the encirclement) reached 70 thousand

Human.

In any case, the significance of the Korsun-Shevchenko operation to encircle and destroy a large enemy grouping is very difficult to overestimate. She chained up to half of all tank and more than two-thirds of the enemy air forces operating in Right-Bank Ukraine. The troops of the two Ukrainian fronts, having defeated significant forces of the German troops, made it much easier for their neighbors, who operated on the left flank of the Soviet-German front, to carry out the Nikopol-Krivoy Rog operation.

⁴⁰⁰ Zhukov G.K. Memories and reflections. T. 3. S. 114.

⁴⁰¹ Konev I.S. Notes of the front commander. S. 210.

⁴⁰² Tippelskirch K. History of the Second World War. pp. 354–355.

On February 18, Moscow saluted the troops of the 2nd Ukrainian Front. Not a word was said about the 1st Ukrainian Front. Zhukov believed that this was Stalin's unforgivable mistake. After all, it is known that the encirclement and destruction of the enemy was carried out by the troops of both fronts.

On the day when the fireworks were held in Moscow, the Headquarters of the All-Russian Supreme Command ordered the commander of the 1st Ukrainian Front to prepare an offensive operation in order to "break the German grouping in the Kremenets, Starokonstantinov, Tarnopol area and capture the Berestechko, Brody, Tarnopol, Proskurov, Khmelnyki line." In the future, it was required, "firmly securing oneself from the side of Lvov, to advance in the general direction towards Chertkov in order to cut off the southern group of German troops from the escape route to the west in the strip north of the river. Dniester.⁴⁰³ The start of the offensive was scheduled for March 4–6, 1944, and the plan for the operation, which received the name Proskurovsko-Chernovitskaya, had to be submitted to the General Staff no later than February 25.

During February 18–20, Zhukov first worked on all issues related to the conduct of the operation at Headquarters and the General Staff, and then went to the 1st Ukrainian Front. Together with Vatutin, they clarified the details of the plan on the spot, and already on February 23 the corresponding report was sent to Stalin. The plan of operation of the 1st Ukrainian Front was approved by the Supreme Commander.

At the same time, Georgy Konstantinovich was preparing the Uman-Botosha operation of the 2nd Ukrainian Front. Zhukov and Konev submitted a report on the plan for this operation to Headquarters on February 26. The main task was "to defeat the Uman group of Germans and take control of the Ladyzhyn, Gayvoron, Novo Ukrainka border." The next day, Stalin approved the plan, but made an amendment to it: the 6th Panzer Army should not be sent to Novo-Ukrainka, but used to develop a strike on the right flank of the main enemy grouping in the general direction of Kharitonovka.

After that, Zhukov again went to the headquarters of the 1st Ukrainian Front. Vatutin reported to him that he had decided to go to the 60th and 13th armies to check how the issues of interaction with aviation were being resolved and whether the logistics would be ready for the start of the Proskurov-Chernivtsi operation. Georgy Konstantinovich advised him to send his deputies, but Nikolai Fedorovich insisted on his own. And on February 29, Zhukov received a call from the field airfield and was informed that they had brought a seriously wounded front commander. On that ill-fated day, Vatutin, together with a member of the military council of the

front, Major General Krainyukov, left for Rovno, where the headquarters of the 13th Army was located, and from there went to the 60th Army, whose headquarters was located in Slavuta. Krainyukov reported on the incident as follows: "At 18.50, at the entrance to the northern outskirts of the village of Milyatin, which is 18 km south of Goshch, bandits were attacked. During the shootout Comrade. Vatutin was wounded. All measures for the removal of the wounded comrade. Vatutin from the attack area are taken. The nature of the wound: through the bullet of the right thigh with a bone fracture. According to the preliminary conclusion of the surgeon of the Thirteenth Army, the wound is classified as severe, requiring treatment for at least two months. However, the doctors failed to save Vatutin. On the night of April 15, he died.

⁴⁰³ Op. Quoted from: Russian archive: Great Patriotic War. Supreme Command Headquarters: Documents and materials. 1944–1945 T. 16 (5–4). S. 47.

Zhukov, having received news of the wounding of N.F. Vatutin, took command of the front. On 1 March, the Stavka appointed Zhukov commander of the 1st Ukrainian Front, taking control of the 2nd Ukrainian Front. On March 4, 1944, the troops of the 1st Ukrainian Front began

the Proskurov-Chernivtsi offensive operation. At first, the offensive developed successfully, but the slush seriously complicated the advancement of vehicles: artillery lagged behind, tanks got stuck in the mud. Soldiers and commanders were rescued by horse-drawn vehicles, and local residents came to the rescue, who carried mines, shells, boxes of cartridges on their shoulders. On March 9, the 3rd Guards and 4th Tank Armies, having overcome 70–80 kilometers in incredibly difficult conditions, reached Ternopil. By this time, the tanks had used up the entire supply of fuel and were forced to stop. The troops of the 1st Guards Army managed to advance only 24 kilometers.

Despite the slow pace of the offensive, the exit of tank armies to Ternopil created a threat to the Lvov-Odessa railway line, which was the main communication line of German troops in Ukraine. The commander of Army Group "South" Manstein, in an effort to prevent the capture of the railway by the Soviet troops, advanced nine tank and five infantry divisions to the Ternopil-Proskurov line. On March 7, this enemy grouping launched a counteroffensive. Up to 1300 tanks, self-propelled guns and assault guns participated in the unfolding battles on both sides. According to Zhukov, "a fierce battle ensued here, one that we have not seen since the time of the Kursk Bulge." At this time, the troops of the 2nd Ukrainian Front, having gone on the offensive on March 5, managed to complete the breakthrough of the enemy defenses by the end of the day. Front commander

Konev immediately brought the 2nd and 5th Guards Tank Armies into battle. On the fifth day of the Uman-Botoshansk operation, the troops of the front captured Uman, advanced detachments reached the Southern Bug River and crossed it on the move for a 100-kilometer section. The 6th Panzer Army also began operations here.

Zhukov, reflecting the enemy's counterattack in the region of Ternopil and Proskurov, made adjustments to the plan for further actions of the troops of the 1st Ukrainian Front. On March 10, the chief of staff of the front, Lieutenant General A.N. Bogolyubov, sent Stalin a report on the plan for an offensive operation in the Chernivtsi and Lvov directions:

"1. On fulfilling the immediate task of the front, i.e., on capturing Ternopol, Proskurov, I consider it possible, after a five-six-day break, to continue the offensive in order to reach the river. Dniester and thereby cut off the southern group of German troops of the withdrawal route to the west in the strip north of the river. Dniester.

2. The main attack by the forces of the 1st and 4th tank armies, 1st Guards. and the 60th Army (23rd Rifle Division), reinforced by artillery and with the support of the entire front aviation, inflict from the Ternopil, Volochisk, Proskurov area in the general direction to Chertkov, Kamenetz-Podolsky.

An auxiliary strike with the forces of 18 and 38 A (19 rifle divisions) should be delivered from the line of Proskurov, r. Southern Bug to Raigorod in the general direction to Novaya Ushitsa, Mogilev-Podolsky. 404

The transition to the offensive was planned for March 20, and the entire operation was supposed to be carried out in close cooperation with the 2nd Ukrainian Front, "the main blow of which is desirable to be directed to Soroki, and part of the forces to Mogilev-Podolsky."

Stalin, having considered Zhukov's plan, made changes to it and additions that were issued by the directive of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command:

"1. Change the direction of the offensive of the 18th and 38th armies, raising them to the north-west and aiming at Kamenetz-Podolsky ... 2. Do not limit yourself to the exit of the left wing of the front to the Dniester, but force it on the move, developing an attack on Chernivtsi in order to occupy this point and exit to our state border. 3. After capturing the border of Berestechko, Brody,

Gorodishche, Buchach, continue the offensive with the aim of capturing the Lvov, Przemysl region and reaching the right wing of the front on the river. Western Bug, i.e., to our state border, why regroup in such a way as to strengthen the right wing of the front ...

"405

At the same time, Stalin ordered the commander of the 2nd Ukrainian Front, Konev, to cross the Dniester, to reach the Prut River - the border with Romania. Moreover, the main grouping of the front, as requested by Zhukov, was required to be withdrawn to the Mogilev-Podolsky region - Yampol.⁴⁰⁶

Heavy fighting in the region of Ternopil and Proskurov exhausted the main forces of the 1st Ukrainian Front, which on March 12 were forced to go on the defensive. It was necessary to bring up lagging behind reserves and rears and prepare a new blow against the enemy. Meanwhile, the troops of the 2nd Ukrainian Front, having captured bridgeheads on the right bank of the Dniester south of Mogilev-Podolsky, began the liberation of Moldavia. The strike force of the front split the troops of Army Group South, cutting off its left-flank 8th Army from the 1st Tank Army. On the morning of March 21, the troops of the 1st Ukrainian Front resumed their offensive. His 60th and 1st

Guards Armies, 1st, 4th and 3rd Guards Tank Armies struck the main blow to the south, and the 18th and 38th Armies to the southwest and west. This marked the beginning of one of the largest encirclement maneuvers in the history of the Great Patriotic War, brilliantly organized by Zhukov. The troops of the 1st tank army of General M.E. Katukov broke through to a depth of 150 kilometers. On March 24, they immediately crossed the Dniester and five days later, having overcome the Prut, captured the city of Chernivtsi. The 4th tank army of General D.D. Lelyushenko occupied

Kamenets-Podolsky on March 26. The 3rd Guards Tank Army of General P.S. Rybalko, acting together with the 1st Guards Army of General A.A. Grechko, reached the city from the north. As a result, up to 18 enemy divisions ended up in the pocket. On March 26, the Krasnaya Zvezda newspaper published an editorial titled Glorious Victories of the Troops of the 1st Ukrainian Front. It said: "In recent days, the troops of the 1st Ukrainian Front under the command of Marshal Zhukov have won a

number of new outstanding victories over the enemy. They broke through the German defenses in the Ternopil-Proskurov section and reached the Dniester ... Without the risk of falling into exaggeration, we can safely say that

⁴⁰⁵ Ibid. S. 59.

⁴⁰⁶ Ibid. pp. 57–58.

according to the old, stereotyped standards, the attackers undertook an impossible task here. Everything - from the forces at the disposal of the enemy, to the conditions of the terrain and the weather - everything made the offensive difficult and favored the defense ... The art of Soviet

commanders, the stamina of Soviet fighters once again overturned the plans of the Germans. Having exhausted the counterattacking tank and infantry divisions of the enemy in fierce battles, our troops suddenly went on the offensive for the Germans and ripped the enemy front to shreds with heroic blows. But the movement of our troops, with all its swiftness, was not an indiscriminate movement only forward, in a straight line. One of the significant features of these offensive operations of the 1st Ukrainian Front is that, while taking possession of the territory, cutting through the enemy's front, they at the same time consistently, methodically destroyed his manpower and equipment ...

The victories of the troops of the 1st Ukrainian Front are the victories of our valor and skill... Terrible peals of battles that unfolded in the vastness of the south... sound over the whole world, plunging the Nazi invaders and their vassals into awe. It is believed in London, reports London Radio, that the events in Ukraine are a catastrophe for Nazi Germany. However, it was still too early to rest on our laurels: the encirclement front, and

Zhukov was well aware of this, was fragile. By this time, his troops had suffered heavy losses. For example, only 30 percent of the original number of combat vehicles remained in the 3rd Guards Tank Army. In addition, a gap about 30 kilometers wide formed between the 1st Guards and the 4th Tank Armies, which was operating to the right, and the front did not have the strength to cover it. The commander of the German 1st Panzer Army, Colonel General Hube, having concentrated the main forces north of Kamenets Podolsky by the end of March, made a

daring breakthrough in the northwestern direction. At first, Hube proposed to the commander of Army Group South that the 1st Panzer Army break through to the south, beyond the Dniester. However, Manstein insisted on a western direction, believing that "a breakthrough to the west would be crowned with success, since both enemy tank armies would apparently disperse their forces in the direction of the crossings across the Dniester."⁴⁰⁷ For this, it was planned to concentrate the 1st and 4th tank armies in order to defeat the Soviet troops with a counter strike and prevent their breakthrough into Galicia and southern Poland. Hitler initially reacted negatively to the Manstein plan and only after a fierce dispute did he approve it, allocating the 2nd SS Panzer Corps and two infantry divisions for the deblocking strike. However, Hitler apparently did not forgive Manstein for his intransigence. "In the evening at the Fuhrer's," Manstein wrote in his diary on March 30. - After presenting the swords (an additional award to the Order of the Knight's Cross. - V.D.), he told me that he had decided to transfer command of the army group to another general (Model). In the east, the time for large-scale operations, for which I was particularly suited, had passed. Here it is important now to just stubbornly hold positions. The beginning of this new method of command and control of troops must be associated with a new name and a new motto. Hence the change

⁴⁰⁷ Manstein E. Lost Victories. S. 658.

command of the army group, whose name he also intends to change.”⁴⁰⁸ At the same time, the commander of Army Group A, Field Marshal Kleist, was removed from his post and transferred to the reserve, who was replaced by General F. Scherner.

The infliction of a deblocking blow by the enemy was predicted by Zhukov. “We then had solid data,” Georgy Konstantinovich noted after the war, “obtained from various sources, about the decision of the encircled enemy to break through to the south across the Dniester in the Zaleshikov region. Such a decision seemed quite possible and logical.”⁴⁰⁹ However, the front's reconnaissance was unable to timely uncover the details of the German command's preparations for the operation. On April 4, the enemy, having concentrated the efforts of five divisions in two sectors, where only two Soviet divisions, weakened in previous battles, were defending in a 40-kilometer zone, went on the offensive. Within two days, the deblocking group advanced more than 40 kilometers, pushing back the Soviet divisions beyond the Dniester. The encircled troops launched a counterattack and on April 7 connected with the deblocking group in the area of the settlement of Buchach. The 4th Panzer Army of General D.D. Lelyushenko was on the way of the troops making their way from the encirclement. Several times the enemy broke into the place where the army headquarters was located. It came to hand-to-hand combat, in which staff officers clashed with the enemy. Lelyushenko himself even had to interrupt the radio report to Zhukov in order to fight off the Germans who were pressing. Georgy Konstantinovich managed to convey a parting word to the military general: “Go, lead the reflection of the attack, I hope that you will not be taken prisoner, and then you will report.”

E. von Manstein in his memoirs noted that by April 9, the 1st Panzer Army was liberated, without indicating at the same time what the breakthrough to the west cost. According to Zhukov, the encircled group suffered huge losses, only headquarters remained of some formations. “How many Nazis broke through from the encirclement,” he noted, “neither I nor the front headquarters could accurately establish. There were different numbers. Apparently, it was not dozens of tanks with landing troops that emerged from the encirclement, as the troops then reported, but much more.”⁴¹⁰

As a result of the breakthrough of the 1st Panzer Army from the encirclement, the German command managed to condense its troops in the Lvov direction. As a result, the troops of the 1st Ukrainian Front were unable to break through to Lvov, as Stalin demanded, since neither the front nor the Headquarters had the necessary reserves at their disposal. In addition, part of the reserve forces of the front (tank corps, cavalry division and a number of other formations) was involved in the fight against Ukrainian nationalist detachments. On April 17, Zhukov's troops went on the defensive.

Formations and units of the 2nd Ukrainian Front, which carried out the Uman-Botoshansk operation, reached the Dniester in a strip 200 kilometers wide on March 21, crossed the river on the move and captured a bridgehead southeast of Mogilev-Podolsky. These actions created

⁴⁰⁸ Ibid. S. 661.

⁴⁰⁹ Zhukov G.K. Memories and reflections. T. 3. S. 120.

⁴¹⁰ Ibid. pp. 120–121.

a real threat both to the 1st Panzer Army of the enemy and to Army Group A, which stopped the troops of the 3rd Ukrainian Front of General R. Ya. Malinovsky on the Southern Bug River. Stalin, mistakenly believing that the forces of the 1st Ukrainian Front would be enough to encircle the 1st Tank Army, ordered the 2nd Ukrainian Front to assist Malinovsky's troops. In accordance with the directive of the Supreme Command Headquarters of March 22, Konev's armies were to advance along both banks of the Dniester to the Black Sea, prevent Army Group A from retreating beyond the Dniester, and, together with the 3rd Ukrainian Front, encircle and defeat the enemy. The troops of the right wing of the 2nd Ukrainian Front were to capture Chisinau and reach the Prut River.⁴¹¹ Having reached the Prut on March 25, the advanced detachments of the 27th and 52nd

armies the next day already occupied an 85-kilometer sector along the Soviet-Romanian border. On the night of March 28, troops of the 2nd Ukrainian Front crossed the Prut and occupied the near approaches to Iasi and Chisinau, where they met fierce enemy resistance. The main result of the Uman-Botoshansk operation, which ended on April 7, was the liberation of a significant part of the territory of the Right-Bank Ukraine and Moldova, the entry of Soviet troops into the territory of Romania.

Despite the fact that the troops of the 1st Ukrainian Front failed to fully fulfill the assigned tasks, the Proskurov-Chernivtsi operation developed and carried out by Zhukov was marked by significant results: a significant part of the territory of the Right-Bank Ukraine was liberated, the 1st and 4th tank armies of the enemy were defeated. Soviet troops reached the foothills of the Carpathians, cutting the strategic front of the enemy's southern grouping into two parts. The English military theorist B. Liddell Hart, assessing the actions of G.K. Zhukov, noted: "... The left wing of Zhukov's troops launched a new blow in a southerly direction on Tarnopol (since 1944 - Ternopol. - V.D.). This blow, well timed, was delivered immediately after the German counterattacks at Tarnopol were repulsed. Having organized the defense, the Russians repulsed the counterattack and moved after the retreating enemy. The strike was intended to connect with the advancing troops of Konev. After a rapid advance to the Dniester, Konev's troops turned south along the eastern bank of the river, enveloping the enemy's flank and pressing him against the right wing of Konev's troops. This combined strike not only ensured the security of the flanks of the advancing troops, but also opened up good prospects for the development of success. ⁴¹² Zhukov's merits in the battles for the Dnieper and Ukraine were highly appreciated. By a decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR of April 10, 1944, he was awarded the Order of Victory No. 1 - for the skillful fulfillment of the tasks

of the Supreme High Command in directing large-scale military operations, as a result of which outstanding success was achieved in defeating the German troops. On April 22, Zhukov arrived in Moscow, where until April 28 he worked at the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command and the General Staff on plans for the summer-autumn campaign of 1944.

⁴¹¹ See: Russian archive: Great Patriotic War. Headquarters of the Supreme High Command: Documents and materials. 1944–1945 T. 16 (5–4). pp. 60–61.

⁴¹² Liddell Hart BV The Second World War. pp. 607–608.

year and the Belarusian strategic offensive operation. Despite the successes achieved by the Red Army in the winter-spring campaign, Georgy Konstantinovich believed that the German command still had everything necessary for a stubborn defense on the Soviet-German front. As for the "strategic skill of their Supreme Command and the command of army groups", then "after the catastrophe in the Stalingrad region, and especially after the battle of Kursk, it dropped sharply."

"Unlike the first period of the war, - Zhukov noted, - the German was somehow command became thoughtless, devoid of decisions ingenuity, especially challenging environments. there was a lack of correct assessments of the capabilities of their enemy troops. strikes and thus putting their troops in ^{And} ^{WITH} the withdrawal of their groupings from the threat of flank encirclement, the German command was very often late, stalemate ".⁴¹³

On an April evening, Zhukov, Antonov, commander of the armored forces, General Ya.N. Fedorenko, commander of aviation, General A.A. Novikov, and deputy chairman of the SNK V.A. After a brief report by Antonov on the situation on the fronts, reports by Novikov and Fedorenko on the state of aviation and armored forces, Zhukov spoke. He drew Stalin's attention to the grouping of German troops in Belarus, the defeat of which was supposed to collapse the stability of the enemy's defense in his entire eastern direction.

Calling Vasilevsky during the meeting, Stalin reported the information received from him: that in eight to ten days the enemy's Crimean grouping would be finished. In this regard, it may be expedient to start summer operations for the 1st Ukrainian Front in order to envelop the Byelorussian grouping even deeper and pull back the German reserves from the central direction. Antonov did not agree: it is better to start from the north, and then carry out an operation against Army Group Center. Zhukov was of the same opinion. Ultimately, together with Antonov, he was instructed to develop a draft plan for the summer period, which a few days later was presented to Stalin. After discussing the plan for the coming period, the main tasks of the Red Army were formulated in the May Day order of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief. Their essence was to complete the expulsion of the invaders from Soviet territory, to restore the state border of the USSR along its entire

length, to withdraw the European allies from the war on the side of Germany and to free the Poles, Czechs, Slovaks and other peoples of Western Europe from German captivity.⁴¹⁴ -autumn campaign was to prepare and consistently conduct a series of strategic offensive operations in a vast area from the Arctic to the Black Sea. At the first stage of the campaign (June-August), it was planned to deliver three powerful blows and defeat large enemy groupings in turn: first on the Karelian Isthmus and in South Karelia, then on the central sector of the front, in Belarus, and after that - in the western regions of Ukraine in the Lvov region.

⁴¹³ Zhukov G.K. Memories and reflections. T. 3. S. 122.

⁴¹⁴ See: Stalin, I. On the Great Patriotic War of the Soviet Union. M., 1953. S. 145–146.

Sandomierz direction. At the second stage of offensive operations (September - November), it was planned to carry out operations in the Balkans, in the Baltic states and in the Far North. On May 15, Stalin

decided to change the leadership of the fronts. The directive of the Headquarters prescribed "in order to enable Marshal Zhukov to lead the actions of several fronts in the future, to release him from the temporary command of the 1st Ukrainian Front." I.S. Konev was appointed commander of this front at the suggestion of Zhukov. The troops of the 2nd Ukrainian Front were led by General of the Army R.Ya. Malinovsky, and the 3rd Ukrainian Front was led by General of the Army F.I. But in assessing the possible actions of the Soviet troops, it made a serious miscalculation, believing

that the main events would unfold not in the central, but in the southwestern direction. The Soviet leadership skillfully took advantage of this blunder.

In the plans of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command, priority in the future campaign was given to the central sector of the

Soviet-German front. The liberation of Belarus was possible only if such a large enemy grouping was destroyed as Army Group Center (Field Marshal E. Bush, from June 28 - Field Marshal V. Model), which, together with the right-flank formations of the 16th Army of the Army Group "Sever and the left-flank units of the 4th Panzer Army of the Northern Ukraine Army Group numbered 1.2 million people, 9.5 thousand guns and mortars, 900 tanks and assault guns. They were supported by about 1350 aircraft of the 6th and part of the forces of the 1st and 4th air fleets.⁴¹⁶ The main forces were concentrated in the areas of Polotsk, Vitebsk, Orsha, Mogilev, Bobruisk and Kovel, in the most accessible directions for the offensive. A pre-prepared layered defense up to 250–270 kilometers deep was supposed to contribute to the fulfillment of the main task - to firmly hold the Belarusian ledge, or, as the enemy called it, the "balcony", along which the shortest paths to the German borders passed. However, the German command, misled and not expecting the main blow of the Soviet troops in Belarus, did not have sufficient reserves here, moreover, some of them were pinned down by the actions of the partisans. On May 20, General Antonov presented Stalin with a plan that provided for the simultaneous breakthrough of the enemy's defenses in six sectors, the dismemberment and defeat of his troops in parts. Particular importance was attached to the elimination of the most

powerful flank groupings in the areas of Vitebsk and Bobruisk, the rapid advance to Minsk, the encirclement and destruction of the main enemy forces east of Minsk at a depth of 200–300 kilometers. The Soviet troops had to build up their strikes and expand the front of the offensive, relentlessly pursue the enemy, not allowing him to gain a foothold on intermediate lines. As a result of the successful implementation of the plan

⁴¹⁵ See: Russian archive: Great Patriotic War. Headquarters of the Supreme High Command: Documents and materials. 1943–1945 T. 16 (5–4). S. 86.

⁴¹⁶ See: History of the Second World War 1939–1945. M., 1978. T. 9. S. 41, 47.

The operation, called "Bagration", was supposed to liberate the whole of Belarus, go to the coast of the Baltic Sea and to the borders of East Prussia, cut the enemy's front, create favorable conditions for strikes against him in the Baltic.

The 1st Baltic (General of the Army I.Kh. Bagramyan), 3rd Belorussian (Colonel General, from June 26 - General of the Army I.D. Chernyakhovsky), 2nd Belorussian (Colonel General, from 28 July - General of the Army G.F. Zakharov), 1st Belorussian (General of the Army, from June 29 - Marshal of the Soviet Union K.K. Rokossovsky) fronts and the Dnieper military flotilla (captain of the 1st rank V.V. Grigoriev). The total number of troops was more than 2.4 million people, they were armed with 36 thousand guns and mortars, 5200 tanks and self-propelled guns. Operation "Bagration" was supported by 5300 aircraft of the 1st (Colonel General of Aviation T.T. Khryukin), 3rd (Colonel General of Aviation N.F. Papiyin), 4th (Colonel General of Aviation K.A. Vershinin), 6th (Colonel General of Aviation F.P. Polynin) and 16th (Colonel General of Aviation S.I. Rudenko) air armies. Long-range aviation (marshal, from August 19 - chief air marshal A.E. Golovanov) was also involved in its implementation - 1007 aircraft and aviation of the country's air defense forces - 500 fighters. 417 Partisan detachments and formations closely interacted with the troops.

On May 30, I.V. Stalin finally approved the plan for Operation Bagration, which was decided to begin on June 19–20. Zhukov was entrusted with coordinating the actions of the troops of the 1st and 2nd Belorussian fronts, and Vasilevsky - of the 1st Baltic and 3rd Belorussian fronts. Thus, a single strategic grouping was created, while the powers of Zhukov and Vasilevsky were expanded: they received the right to directly direct the combat operations of the fronts.

On the night of May 31, Stalin, Zhukov, Vasilevsky and Antonov worked out at the Headquarters private directives and instructions to the fronts of the Belarusian direction, specific tasks for the first stage of its implementation. Marshal of the Soviet Union A.M. Vasilevsky, evaluating the plan of Operation Bagration, wrote: "It was simple and at the same time bold and grandiose. Its simplicity consisted in the fact that it was based on the decision to use the configuration of the Soviet-German front in the Belarusian theater of operations that was beneficial to us, and we knew for sure that these flank directions were the most dangerous for the enemy, and therefore the most protected. The boldness of the plan stemmed from the desire, without fear of the enemy's counterplans, to strike a decisive blow for the entire summer campaign in one strategic direction. The grandeur of the plan is evidenced by its exceptionally important military and political significance for the further course of the Second World War, the unprecedented scope, as well as the number of simultaneously or sequentially envisaged by the plan and, it would seem, independent, but at the same time closely interconnected front-line operations aimed at achieving common military strategic objectives and political goals."⁴¹⁸

⁴¹⁷ See: Great Patriotic War. 1941–1945 Military-historical essays. Book. 3. Liberation. M., 1999. S. 58.

⁴¹⁸ Vasilevsky A.M. The work of a lifetime. S. 395.

On June 5, at 8 a.m., Zhukov arrived at the temporary command post of the 1st Belorussian Front in the village of Durevichi and immediately began discussing issues related to the preparation of the operation with Front Commander Rokossovsky. Georgy Konstantinovich served in Belarus before the war, studied it well, and therefore gave expert advice. Then a meeting was held with the participation of the commanders of the armies, aviation, armored and mechanized troops, artillery of the front, during which the situation on the right wing of the front, where it was planned to deliver the main blow, was carefully discussed, and measures were taken to organize detailed planning for the upcoming operation. Zhukov paid special attention to the preparation of troops, headquarters and logistics for the beginning of the offensive, to a thorough reconnaissance of the enemy's defenses to its entire tactical depth. Having resolved all issues at the front headquarters, Zhukov and Rokossovsky went to the area of Rogachev and Zhlobin, to the location of the 3rd and 48th armies, and then to the 65th army, where they studied the terrain

and enemy defenses in detail. Here it was necessary to strike the main blow in the direction of Bobruisk - Slutsk - Baranovichi, and part of the forces - through Osipovichi and Pukhovichi to Minsk. On June 8, Zhukov went to the 2nd Belorussian Front to discuss the actions of the 49th Army, which was called upon to deliver an auxiliary strike in the Mogilev-Minsk direction. The 33rd and 50th armies were to carry out actions that fetter the enemy and

go on the offensive later. The representative of the General Staff, General S.M. Shtemenko, was appointed responsible for the preparation of the operation by the 2nd Belorussian Front.

In preparing Operation Bagration, the Stavka paid great attention to the achievement of surprise. To misinform the enemy, the fronts were ordered to create at least three defensive lines at a depth of up to 40 kilometers. Settlements adapted to all-round defense. Front, army and divisional newspapers published materials on defensive topics. As a result, the attention of the enemy was largely diverted from the impending offensive. The troops strictly observed the regime of radio silence, and a narrow circle of people was involved in the development of the operation plan. In full, only six people knew her plan: the Supreme Commander-in-Chief, his deputy, the chief of the General Staff and his first deputy, the head of the Operations Directorate and one of his deputies. The regrouping of troops was carried out in compliance with all camouflage measures. All movements were carried out only at night and in small groups.

In order to give the German command the impression that the main blow would be delivered in the summer in the south, at the direction of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command, on the right wing of the 3rd Ukrainian Front, north of Chisinau, a false group was created consisting of nine rifle divisions, reinforced with tanks and artillery. In this area, models of tanks and anti-aircraft artillery guns were installed, and fighter jets patrolled in the air.

As a result, the German command failed to reveal the plan of the Soviet Supreme High Command, nor the scale of the upcoming offensive, nor the direction of the main attack. Therefore, Hitler from 34 tank and mechanized divisions kept 24 divisions to the south

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On June 14 and 15, the commander of the 1st Belorussian Front held exercises on drawing the forthcoming operation in the 65th and 28th armies, which were attended by Zhukov and a group of generals from the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command. Corps commanders, division commanders, artillery commanders and chiefs of army branches were involved in the draw. During the training, the tasks of rifle and tank formations, plans for an artillery offensive and interaction with aviation were worked out in detail. The main attention, according to Zhukov's memoirs, was focused on a thorough study of the characteristics of the nature of the terrain in the zone of upcoming military operations, the organization of the enemy's defense and methods for the fastest access to the Slutsk-Bobruisk road. From here, with access to Bobruisk and its capture, it was possible to close the retreat routes of the enemy's Zhlobin-Bobruisk grouping. In the next three days, the same exercises were held in other armies. On June 22, both fronts, the 1st and 2nd Belorussian, conducted reconnaissance in force. As a result, it was possible to clarify the location of the enemy's fire system directly

on its forward edge and the location of some batteries that were not known before. The Belarusian strategic offensive operation "Bagration" began on June 23. After more than two hours of artillery preparation, which was completed by a raid by attack aircraft and volleys of Katyushas, the infantry went on the

attack. For the first time in the Great Patriotic War, she followed a double barrage of fire 1.5–2 kilometers deep. The enemy, despite the heavy fire of the Soviet artillery, quickly came to his senses, since not all firing points were suppressed. The troops of the 6th Guards and 43rd Armies of the 1st Baltic Front, overcoming the stubborn resistance of the enemy, reached the Western Dvina on the night of June 24, crossed the river on the move and captured several bridgeheads on its left bank. Success also accompanied the 30th and 5th armies of the 3rd Belorussian Front, which at dawn on June 25 occupied Bogushevsk, an important center of resistance for the German troops. In the Orsha direction, where the 11th Guards and 31st Armies were advancing, it was not possible to break through the enemy defenses. The formations of the 2nd Belorussian Front managed on the first day to break into the enemy defenses, force the Pronya River, and subsequently, having overcome the Vesta River, advance 30 kilometers. On the Rogachev-Bobruisk direction, where the 3rd Army of the 1st Belorussian Front was advancing, the enemy put up fierce resistance. As a result, the army troops managed

to capture only the first and second trenches of the enemy defense. "In this situation," recalled Marshal of Artillery N. D. Yakovlev, "Commander A. V. Gorbatov, a man who had already passed a considerable army way and well understood the complexity of military labor, behaved with restraint, perhaps even calmly. And in this calmness one could feel his firm confidence that the commanders of the corps, divisions and regiments of his army, in spite of everything, would adequately fulfill their military duty. Therefore, I tried not to particularly disturb them with phone calls, but patiently waited for further development.

events. G.K. Zhukov also did not betray his excitement. He did not even disturb the commander, and, walking along the grove in which the army's NP was located, he only occasionally took an interest in reports about the combat situation in general at the front and with his neighbor - in the troops of the 2nd Belorussian Front. He behaved the same way all day, evening and night, and then even the next day. Such composure could only be envied."

And to the south, in that swampy wooded area where the 65th army of General P.I. Batov was advancing, success was indicated. Against the backdrop of what was happening in the Gorbатов army zone, the report of the commander of the 65th Army seemed implausible to Zhukov. In the afternoon, when the observation post of the 65th Army was already rolling up to move forward, Batov was urgently called to the telegraph machine. Here is how Pavel Ivanovich Batov describes what happened next: "“Personally report the actual situation in front of the army front. Zhukov,” the telegraph operator read. Answer: “Ivanov’s corps broke through the enemy’s defenses on the front eight kilometers. By 12.00 the troops had advanced twelve kilometers. Corps Panov entered. The accelerated version of the first day of the offensive was completed ahead of schedule.” Again I read on the tape: “This cannot be. Romanenko and Gorbатов covered only two kilometers. Report the exact location of the troops.” Answer: “The rifle divisions of Ivanov’s corps reached the Gorodets-Protasy line. The tank corps is fighting ahead in the Brozh area. I am moving my command post to Gomza.” The device was silent. Finally, he tapped out a short phrase: “I’ll come to see it myself.”⁴²⁰

At 3 pm, Zhukov, Rokossovsky, and Novikov arrived at the observation post in Gomza. As soon as their cars slipped through, enemy artillery from Parichi covered a section of the road. Despite this, Georgy Konstantinovich demanded a report from the army commander. Zhukov made sure that Batov's troops were moving from the southeast around Bobruisk, but Gorbатов so far could not go there from the northeast. Consequently, the plan to encircle the enemy at Bobruisk is still not

was performed.

The troops of the 48th Army also had little success. “During the preparation of the operation, the enemy’s defenses in the Rogachev-Bobruisk direction were poorly explored, as a result of which an underestimation of the strength of his was made, as a result of this Zhukov later admitted. — resistance mistake, the 48th armies were given an overestimated sector of the 3rd and K breakthrough southern sector. besides, the armies did not have sufficient means of a breakthrough. As a representative of the Headquarters, I did not correct the front command in time ”⁴²¹ Zhukov remembered that General Gorbатов proposed to attack B. S. Bakharov's 9th Panzer Corps somewhat to the north - from a wooded and swampy area, where, according to him, the Germans had very weak defenses. When developing the action plan, Gorbатов's proposal was not taken into account, and now the mistake had to be corrected. Zhukov allowed to strike in a place that the commander of the 3rd Army had previously looked after. This made it possible to overturn the enemy and rapidly advance towards Bobruisk, cutting off the German

⁴²⁰ Batov P.I. In campaigns and battles. M., 2000. S. 395.

⁴²¹ Zhukov G.K. Memories and reflections. T. 3. S. 141.

troops the only way to escape through the Berezina River. To develop the success of the operation, mobile groups were introduced into the battle: the 1st Tank Corps of General V.V. Butkov - on the 1st Baltic Front, the horse-mechanized group of General N.S. Oslikovsky, and then the 5th Guards Tank Army Marshal P.A. Rotmistrov - on the 3rd Belorussian, cavalry-mechanized group of General I.A. Pliev - on the 1st Belorussian Front. In the morning

On June 25, the troops of the 43rd Army of General A.P. Beloborodov (1st Baltic Front) and the 39th Army of General I.I. Lyudnikov (3rd Belorussian Front) united in the Gnezdilovichy area. As a result, five infantry divisions of the German 3rd Panzer Army, totaling 35,000 men, were surrounded near Vitebsk.⁴²² Soviet troops repelled all enemy attempts to break through the encirclement and on June 27 completed its defeat. On June 26, Vitebsk was taken by storm, the next day - Orsha.

The offensive developed on the 1st Belorussian Front no less successfully. On June 27, his troops surrounded about six divisions of the 35th Army and 41st Tank Corps of the 9th Army southeast of Bobruisk. By 1700, aerial reconnaissance reported that the enemy was preparing to break out of the encirclement. Representatives of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command Zhukov and Novikov decided to involve the 16th Air Army of General S.I. Rudenko to destroy the encircled troops. For an hour and a half, 400 bombers under the cover of 126 fighters dealt a massive blow to the enemy. The encircled group was completely demoralized, up to 6 thousand soldiers and officers, led by the commander of the 35th Army Corps, General K. Lyuttsov, surrendered.⁴²³ On June 29, Bobruisk was liberated. And three days earlier, the troops of the 2nd Belorussian Front, with the active support of the formations of the 4th Air Army of General K.A. Vershinin, liberated Mogilev.

As a result of the first six days of the Soviet offensive, Army Group Center was on the brink of disaster. Its defense was broken through in all directions of the 520-kilometer front. By the end of June 28, formations of the 1st and 3rd Belorussian Fronts bypassed both flanks of the army group, creating conditions for delivering concentric strikes in the direction of Minsk in order to encircle the German 4th Army.

Zhukov, analyzing the data of the situation, was waiting for what the German command would do. "We, frankly, were somewhat surprised by their grossly erroneous maneuvers, which doomed the troops to a catastrophic outcome," he later noted. "Instead of quickly withdrawing to the rear lines and throwing strong groups to their flanks, which were threatened by Soviet strike groups, German troops were drawn into protracted frontal battles east and northeast of Minsk."⁴²⁴ Having received information about the successful offensive of Soviet troops in Belarus, Hitler withdrew from army group commander

⁴²² See: Great Patriotic War. 1941–1945 Military-historical essays. Book. 3. Liberation. S. 63.

⁴²³ Ibid. S. 64.

⁴²⁴ Zhukov G.K. Memories and reflections. T. 3. S. 143.

"Center" Field Marshal E. Bush. The new commander was Field Marshal V. Model, who organized the defense east of Minsk. Security and special units were transferred here from Army Groups "North" and "Northern Ukraine".

After discussing the current situation with Zhukov and Vasilevsky, Stalin sent private directives to the fronts on June 28-29, specifying the tasks for developing the offensive. The 1st and 3rd Belorussian fronts were to swiftly reach Minsk and liberate it with a bilateral roundabout maneuver. The troops of the 1st Baltic Front were given the task of pursuing the enemy in the northwestern and western directions, capturing Polotsk and ensuring the actions of the troops encircling the German 4th Army near Minsk. The task of frontal pursuit of the enemy was assigned to the 2nd Belorussian Front in order to tie him down in the center of the Belorussian ledge.

Field Marshal V. Model was clearly not strong enough to hold back the advance of the Soviet troops. Soviet tank units and formations, bypassing resistance centers, passed up to 50 kilometers a day, and the average daily rate of advance of combined arms formations was 20 kilometers. The Belarusian partisans provided great assistance to the advancing troops, destroying the enemy's communications, inflicting blows on him from the rear. July 3, the capital of Belarus was liberated. To the east of Minsk, a 100,000-strong enemy group was surrounded. By July 11, it was destroyed, about 35 thousand soldiers and officers surrendered. 425 General K. Tippelskirch, who took command of the 4th Army on June 25, subsequently noted: "... The result of the battle that has now lasted 10 days was amazing. About 25 divisions were destroyed or surrounded. Only a few formations defending on the southern flank of the 2nd Army remained full-fledged, while the remnants that escaped destruction almost completely lost their combat capability. 426

The German command, in an effort to stabilize its front in the east, made major regroupings of troops and transferred 46 divisions and four brigades to Belarus from Germany, Poland, Hungary, Norway, Italy and the Netherlands, as well as from other sectors of the front.⁴²⁷

On July 7, Zhukov, at the direction of the Headquarters, arrived in Moscow. At Stalin's dacha, where Zhukov had arrived with Antonov, there were also Molotov and other members of the GKO. The question was discussed about the possibilities of Germany to wage war on two fronts - against the USSR and the expeditionary forces of the Allies, who landed on June 6 in northwestern France. Stalin asked Zhukov if the Soviet troops could begin the liberation of Poland and reach the Vistula without stopping, and in what sector it would be possible to bring the 1st Polish Army into action. Zhukov believed that the Soviet troops could not only reach the Vistula, but should also seize bridgeheads behind it in order to ensure a further offensive in the Berlin direction. What

⁴²⁵ Great Patriotic War. 1941–1945 Military-historical essays. Book. 3. Liberation. S. 69.

⁴²⁶ Tippelskirch. K. History of the Second World War. S. 447.

⁴²⁷ See: Collection of materials on the composition, grouping and regrouping of the ground forces of Nazi Germany and the troops of its former satellites on the Soviet-German front for the period 1941–1945. M., 1956. Issue. 4. P. 90–92, 106–110, 126–128.

As far as the Polish army is concerned, it must be aimed at Warsaw. Zhukov was supported by Antonov. Georgy Konstantinovich was instructed to take over the coordination of actions of the 1st Ukrainian Front, paying attention to its interaction with the 1st Belorussian Front.

Vasilevsky's group of fronts was tasked with cutting off the German Army Group North and capturing East Prussia. Zhukov, believing that the enemy would put up particularly fierce resistance in East Prussia, proposed first to liberate the Lvov region and the eastern part of Poland.

Meanwhile, the troops of the 1st Ukrainian Front were preparing for the Lvov-Sandomierz strategic offensive operation. Its goal was to encircle and destroy the Lvov-Brod grouping of the enemy, take Lvov, cut through the Northern Ukraine Army Group, throw one part of it into the Polesie region, the other to the Carpathians and reach the line with the main forces of the 1st Ukrainian Front. the Vistula river. Georgy Konstantinovich deployed his command post on the 1st Ukrainian Front on July 11 in the Lutsk region. On the

morning of July 13, the forward units of the 3rd Guards and 13th Armies went on the attack in the Rava-Russian direction. They broke through

the enemy's main line of defense and advanced to a depth of 8-12 kilometers. Following them, the main forces entered the battle, advancing by the end of July 15 to a depth of 25-30 kilometers on a front of up to 60 kilometers. Then the mechanized cavalry group of General V.K. By this time, Baranov's group had captured Derevlyany, cutting off the escape route to the west of the enemy's Brod grouping.

On the Lvov direction, the formations of the 38th Army of General K.S. Moskalenko, overcoming the stubborn resistance of the enemy, slowly moved forward. The troops of the 60th Army of General P.A. Kurochkin, together with the forward detachments of the 3rd Guards Tank Army of General P.S. up to 18 kilometers. Through it, under enemy flank fire, the main forces of the 3rd Guards Tank and 4th Tank Armies were successively introduced into the breakthrough. By the end of July 18, the formations of the 3rd Guards Tank Army, together with the cavalry mechanized group of V.K. to Lvov. On July 19, Zhukov sent an officer with an extraordinary

report:

"Comrade.

Stalin. Copy of com.

Antonov. In connection with the close approach of our troops to the state border, I report my thoughts on the construction of the operation of the Belarussian fronts for the near future:

inclusive and the capture of East Prussia or, in extreme cases, simultaneously with the exit to the Vistula, cutting off East Prussia from Central Germany.

2. East Prussia, in terms of the presence of fortified belts, engineering equipment and natural conditions, is a very serious obstacle. The approaches to Königsberg from the southeast and south are covered by five fortified bands, and from the east, in addition, to the west of Insterburg, a flood area has been prepared. The most advantageous directions for an offensive into East Prussia:

1st direction - from the Tilsit region along the coast in the general direction to Koenigsberg through Libots. **The 2nd direction** - from the Kaunas-Alytus region

through Gumbinen to Koenigsberg, bypassing the flood area and the Letzensky fortified region from the south. **3rd direction** - from the Mława

area through Hohenstein - Allenstein to Braunsberg. In addition, a strong grouping must be thrown east of the Vistula in the general direction of Marienburg to cut off East Prussia from the Danzig region ... G. Zhukov

No. 316 July 19, 1944.⁴²⁸ However, Stalin did not accept Zhukov's plan and did not agree, as requested by Georgy

Konstantinovich , to strengthen the fronts in the East Prussian direction. Zhukov believed that

V subsequent resulting in an extremely difficult And “this was a serious mistake of the Supreme, the need behind for a bloody East Prussian operation

"429 ... The troops of the 1st Ukrainian Front continued the offensive. On July 22, the Brodskaya grouping of the enemy was defeated, the 1st Guards Tank Army, in cooperation with Baranov's cavalry-mechanized group, crossed the San River in the Yaroslav region and captured a bridgehead on its western bank. On July 27, as a result of concentric attacks by the 3rd Guards Tank Army from the west, the 60th Army from the east and the 4th Tank Army from the south, Lvov was liberated. The 1st Guards Army of General Grechko occupied Galich on July 24, and Stanislav on July 27. The 18th army of General Zhuravlev by this time had reached the area south of Kalush. By the end of July, the Northern Ukraine Army Group was divided into two parts: the remnants of its 4th Panzer Army rolled back to the Vistula, and the troops of the German 1st Panzer Army and the Hungarian 1st Army - to the southwest, to the Carpathians. On July 20, during a meeting at Hitler's Headquarters, an attempt was made to assassinate the Fuhrer. However, Hitler survived and brutally dealt not only with the conspirators, but also with all those suspected of disloyalty to the regime. General G.

Guderian was appointed Chief of the General Staff of the High Command of the Ground Forces. Having accepted the case, he came to the conclusion that "the position of Army Group Center"

428 Zhukov G.K. Memories and reflections. T. 3. S. 152–153.

429 Ibid. S. 154.

after July 22, 1944, it was simply catastrophic; you can't imagine anything worse ... The Russians, it seemed, rushed in an unstoppable stream to the river. The Vistula from Sandomierz to Warsaw... The only forces at our disposal were in Romania, in the rear of Army Group South Ukraine. Just one glance at the railroad map was enough to understand that the transfer of these reserves would take a long time.”⁴³⁰

Guderian, upon taking office, took vigorous measures to restore the front of defense along the western bank of the Vistula. Reserves were hastily advanced here from the depths and from other sectors of the front. Even more stubbornness began to appear in the actions of the enemy troops. Zhukov noted that “the command of Army Group Center in this extremely difficult situation found the right way to act. Due to the fact that they did not have a continuous front of defense and it was impossible to create one in the absence of the necessary forces, the German command decided to delay the offensive of our troops, mainly by short counterattacks. Under the cover of these strikes on the rear lines, the troops being transferred from Germany and from other sectors of the Soviet-German front were deployed in defense. ⁴³¹

However, Guderian was unable to stop the advance of the Soviet troops. On July 29–31, troops of the 1st Ukrainian Front crossed the Vistula and captured several bridgeheads on its western bank south and north of Sandomierz. Given the development of the offensive in two divergent directions - Sandomierz and Carpathian, Stalin ordered the formation of the troops of his left wing (1st Guards, 18th and 8th Air Armies) of the 4th Ukrainian Front under the command of Colonel General I.E. Petrova.

The enemy, having transferred 16 divisions, 6 brigades of assault guns, several separate battalions of heavy tanks (such as the King Tiger) to the Sandomierz region in early August, launched a series of strong counterattacks. But the troops of the 1st Ukrainian Front were securely entrenched in the bridgehead.

The troops of the 1st Belorussian Front from July 18 to August 2 successfully carried out the Lublin-Brest offensive operation. Having overturned the fiercely defending main forces of the German 2nd and 9th armies of the Center group and the 4th tank army of the Northern Ukraine group, having covered 260 kilometers, they crossed the Vistula on the move, seized bridgeheads on its western bank, and created favorable conditions for the subsequent offensive in the Warsaw-Berlin direction.

By the end of August, Soviet troops participating in the Belarusian strategic offensive operation reached the line of Jelgava - Dobeles - Augustow - the Narew and Vistula rivers. During the operation, they advanced 550–600 kilometers westward, defeated Army Group Center, and inflicted a crushing defeat on Army Groups North and Northern Ukraine. The contribution of G.K. Zhukov to the expulsion of the enemy from Ukraine and his

skillful leadership of the troops in the Belarusian operation were highly appreciated. On July 29, 1944, by the Decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, he was awarded the second Gold Star medal of the Hero of the Soviet Union.

⁴³⁰ Guderian G. Memoirs of a soldier. pp. 483–484.

⁴³¹ Zhukov G.K. Memories and reflections. T. 3. S. 154.

The news of the award caught Georgy Konstantinovich at the front. The marshal's colleagues quickly set the table, and the paramedic Lidia Zakharova, who accompanied Zhukov, was instructed to hand him a huge bouquet. "Lida in a uniform dress, crimson with joy and beaming with happiness, presented flowers. Zhukov gave her a paternal kiss on the cheek, whispered something to her, which made Lida's face flush with a bright blush, and took the bouquet. Everyone in the room noticed how the marshal's usually stern and hard look warmed up. 432 Rumors about the relationship between the marshal and the lieutenant of

the medical service reached L. Z. Mekhlis, who did not miss the opportunity to tell such a message to Stalin. When asked by the Supreme Commander whether "this woman" interferes with Zhukov's work, Mekhlis replied: "It doesn't interfere, but his authority undermines him." To this, Stalin said: "There is no need, Comrade Mekhlis, to get into Zhukov's relationship with the military assistant. This woman helps Zhukov, treats him. She helps him to be healthy, and therefore, to stay in the ranks. We really need healthy Zhukov." In his memoirs, Zhukov writes that, on Stalin's instructions, on the evening of August 23, he arrived in Moscow for a meeting.

Archival materials allow us to assert that Georgy Konstantinovich was a little mistaken: he worked at the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command and the General Staff from August 26 to September 2 - he was preparing to carry out a special task of the State Defense Committee. "I had to fly to the headquarters of the 3rd Ukrainian Front," recalled Georgy Konstantinovich, "in order to prepare the front for war with Bulgaria, whose tsarist government still continued to cooperate with Nazi Germany."433

The Bulgarian government, in an effort to prevent the entry of the Red Army into the territory of their country, emphasized in every possible way neutrality in relation to the USSR and at the same time negotiated in Cairo with representatives of Great Britain and the United States on ways for Bulgaria to exit the war. At the same time, the rulers of Bulgaria put before Germany the question of the withdrawal of German troops and military mission from the country. While all these negotiations were going on, 16,000 people were sent from South Dobruja, where most of the German troops were located, to the territory of Romania, who took part in the hostilities against the Red Army. During the same period, German warships and transport ships moved from Romania to Bulgarian ports.

On August 30, the Soviet government handed a note to the government of Bulgaria with a proposal to stop the passage of German troops through its territory, considering it "as direct assistance to the Germans in the war against the Soviet Union." "pacts, on the evacuation of the Bulgarian expeditionary force from Yugoslavia and the observance by the country of strict neutrality and measures to stabilize

432 Op. by: Sulyanov A.K. Marshal Zhukov. Glory, oblivion, immortality. Minsk: Harvest, 2002, p. 246.

433 Zhukov G.K. Memories and reflections. T. 3. S. 164.

434 Foreign policy of the Soviet Union during the Great Patriotic War. M... 1946. Vol. 2. S. 198-199.

the internal political situation in the country.⁴³⁵ Despite this, the Soviet government on September 5 announced that from now on the USSR "will be at war with Bulgaria", which "in fact has been waging war against the Soviet Union since 1941."⁴³⁶ This was due to the fact that the Soviet troops had already completed the concentration at the Romanian-Bulgarian border, and the Politburo of the Bulgarian Workers' Party approved the plan for the uprising in Bulgaria, which was scheduled for September 9th. Stalin approved the plan for the Bulgarian operation of the troops of the 3rd Ukrainian Front, but the uncertainty of relations between the USSR and Bulgaria prevented its implementation. Therefore, the Soviet Union declared war on her. On September 3, Zhukov flew to the headquarters of the 3rd Ukrainian

Front in Chernovody (Romania) to prepare his troops for the offensive. The special meaning of the upcoming operation was to bring Bulgaria out of the war on the side of Germany by the coordinated actions of the Soviet troops and the forces of the popular uprising. To this end, it was planned to strike the main blow at the city of Shumen, reach the Russe (Rushchuk) - Burgas line and stop here. Further actions were made dependent on the course of the armed uprising. On September 6, the Bulgarian government announced the severance of relations with Germany and requested the terms of a truce with the USSR.

The Bulgarian government then announced that Bulgaria had been at war with Germany since 1800 September 7. But all this had no effect on the position of the leadership of the Soviet Union, which expected to bring to power in Bulgaria a government headed by G. Dimitrov.

On September 8, at dawn, an amphibious assault landed in the port of Varna, and at 11 o'clock the troops of the 3rd Ukrainian Front crossed the Romanian-Bulgarian border. The advance of the Soviet troops was carried out without a single shot being fired. On September 9, at 19 o'clock, the Headquarters sent Zhukov, People's Commissar of the Navy Kuznetsov and Tolbukhin, Commander of the 3rd Ukrainian Front, a directive: , according to the instructions of the State Defense Committee, orders to complete operations to occupy the settlements planned according to the plan by 21.00 on September 9 and from 22.00 on September 9 with. stop hostilities in Bulgaria, firmly entrenched in that strip of Bulgaria, which is occupied by our troops."⁴³⁷

On September 12, G.K. Zhukov returned to Moscow, but on the 15th he received I.V. Stalin's order to fly to the 1st Belorussian Front.

On August 1, in Warsaw, according to a previously developed plan, under the conditional name "Storm", an uprising was raised against the German troops by the forces of the Home Army. The purpose of the uprising was to capture Warsaw before it was liberated by the Red Army and use this as an argument in the political struggle against the Polish

⁴³⁵ See: Great Patriotic War. 1941–1945 Military-historical essays. Book. 3. Liberation. S. 103.

⁴³⁶ Ibid.

⁴³⁷ Op. Quoted from: Russian archive: Great Patriotic War. Supreme Command Headquarters: Documents and materials. 1944–1945 T. 16 (5–4). S. 141.

committee of national liberation, created in July 1944, and the Craiova Rada Narodova, as well as in negotiations with the allies, primarily with the USSR, on the post-war state structure of Poland. However, the German garrison, reinforced by SS and police units, managed to defeat the rebels and capture a number of districts of Warsaw. The leadership of the USSR, trying to help the rebels, set the 1st Belorussian Front (Marshal K.K. Rokossovsky) the task of repelling the German counterattack on the 2nd Panzer Army and moving on to a broad offensive. The 1st Army of the Polish Army was to strike from the Magnushevsky bridgehead against Warsaw along the left bank of the Vistula. The German command, having introduced the Hermann Goering tank division and two infantry divisions into the battle, did not allow expanding the bridgehead and developing the offensive. On August 29, by decision of Stalin, the offensive of the 1st Belorussian Front, with the exception of the troops of the right wing, was stopped. But soon the troops of the

front, including the 1st Army of the Polish Army, were given the task of reaching Prague, a suburb of Warsaw, crossing the Vistula and joining up with the rebels. It was not possible to complete this task, since six Polish battalions that crossed to the bridgehead in the Chernyakuva region suffered heavy losses in battle and on September 21, by order of the commander of the 1st Belorussian Front, were withdrawn beyond the Vistula.

Zhukov, having familiarized himself with the situation and talked with Rokossovsky, called Stalin and asked for permission to stop the offensive on the sector of the 1st Belorussian Front - it was clearly unpromising due to the great fatigue of the troops and significant losses. Georgy Konstantinovich also asked for an order to transfer the troops of the right wing of the 1st Belorussian and the left wing of the 2nd Belorussian fronts to the defense in order to give them rest and replenishment. Stalin did not like this turn of events, and he ordered Zhukov, along with Rokossovsky, to arrive at Headquarters.

From the memoirs of Georgy Konstantinovich it follows that Stalin considered it unreasonable to stop the offensive when the defeated enemy was no longer able to restrain the pressure of our troops. But Zhukov and Rokossovsky objected to him: the enemy had already managed to create a defense, to pull up reserves, and now he was successfully repelling all the attacks of the Soviet troops, who were suffering heavy losses. Stalin, obviously dissatisfied with such unanimity of the two military leaders, was forced to agree with their opinion.

K.K. Rokossovsky in his book "Soldier's Duty" sets out all this in a somewhat simpler way. At the end of September, he decided to stop the offensive due to the lack of sufficient forces and means for its further conduct. "Having returned to the front-line command post," writes Konstantin Konstantinovich, "I contacted Moscow. I reported on my decision to stop the offensive. Stalin did not answer immediately, he asked to wait a bit. Soon he again called me to the HF. He said he agreed with the proposal. He ordered the offensive to stop, and the troops of the front to go over to a solid defense and begin preparing a new offensive operation. 438 Zhukov recalls that the day after the meeting, Stalin

phoned him at the People's Commissariat of Defense and asked how he looked at the fact that the leadership of all fronts would be transferred to the Headquarters in the future. "I understood that he meant to abolish the representatives of the Headquarters for coordinating the fronts, and I felt that this idea arose not only as a result of our dispute yesterday. The war was coming to an end,

there were a few final operations left to be carried out, and I.V. Stalin probably wanted him alone to be in charge of these operations. 439 Zhukov answered in the affirmative. The next day,

Georgy Konstantinovich learned about his appointment as commander of the 1st Belorussian Front - a front located in the Berlin direction.

Berlin was about 600 kilometers away.

Chapter XII. And for the glory

They fought not with windmills, but with a strong enemy. I.S. Konev explained this common truth twenty years after the war ... to some of his associates, marshals and generals, with whom he went through a difficult path from Moscow to Berlin. But even if some of the marshals forgot which enemy they defeated,

what can we say about the would-be "specialists" in the history of the Great Patriotic War, who suddenly appeared in the late eighties and nineties in unexpectedly large numbers. A host of authors competing with each other began to prove that the basis of all our military victories, starting with the battle for Moscow, is nothing but a huge number of victims. It makes no sense to offer them, who have succeeded in completely different fields, to try on the field uniforms of Zhukov, Rokossovsky, Konev ...

At the beginning of 1945, the hardened Nazi J. Goebbels made a curious entry in his diary: "The General Staff presents me a book with biographical data and portraits of Soviet generals and marshals. From this book it is not difficult to draw various information about the mistakes we have made in the past years. These marshals and generals are exceptionally young on average, almost none of them over 50 years old. They have a wealth of experience in revolutionary political activity, are convinced Bolsheviks, extremely energetic people, and one can read on their faces that they have a good national leaven. I inform the Führer about the book of the General Staff on Soviet marshals and generals, which was presented to me for viewing, adding that I have the impression that we are not in a position to compete with such leaders at all. The Fuehrer fully shares my opinion. Our generals are too old, have outlived their usefulness."

You can throw muddy water into the history of the war and shuffle minor facts in it. The main thing is undeniable: Stalin outplayed Hitler, and the blue-blooded command of the Wehrmacht was unable to compete with the Soviet marshals and generals, who had a "good people's leaven." But this same leaven, which G.K. Zhukov proudly and more than once noticed among his associates, sometimes played not very good jokes with our military leaders. It is seen,

it was from the peasant hinterland that some of them carried out the property: first, we will all fall together in unison, and then it's not a sin to argue who was smarter, stronger and quicker in deed. Yes, and fame, familiar to an aristocrat, is not a secondary matter for a peasant.

In 1965, at a meeting in the Main Political Directorate of the Soviet Army and Navy, Marshal of the Soviet Union K.S. Moskalenko bitterly noted: "The trouble is that we have historical documents and memoirs written from the point of view of today. And you need to write as it really was, moreover, without belittling others, without sticking out yourself. In the German memoirs, no general vilifies others (except Hitler). We are trying to belittle the role of neighboring formations and associations." The reason for this meeting and the discussion that unfolded at it were the memoirs of V.I. Chuikov, who commanded the 8th Guards Army during the battle for Berlin, published on the pages of the October magazine. The illustrious marshal argued: "The fate of Berlin, and with it the whole of fascist Germany, could have been decided in February ... the capture of Berlin in February 1945 would mean the end of the war." This was followed by the conclusion: "And the victims could be much less compared to those that we suffered in April."

What actually happened in 1945? By the end of October 1944, the Red Army completed the expulsion of German troops from the territory of the Soviet Union, almost completely restored the state border of the USSR and partially transferred hostilities to the territory of Germany and Eastern European countries. The line of the Soviet-German front was reduced by about half, but at the same time the density of the enemy grouping in the Berlin direction increased several times. And this allowed the German command to conduct serious defensive battles, to offer active resistance. The headquarters of the Supreme High Command was preparing for decisive offensive operations in all sectors of the Soviet-German front.

The main one was the Berlin strategic direction, in which the troops of the 1st Belorussian (Marshal G.K. Zhukov), 2nd Belorussian (Marshal K.K. Rokossovsky) and 1st Ukrainian (Marshal I.S. Konev) fronts were to act. In accordance with the plan of the Stavka, at the beginning of 1945, the troops of the 1st Belorussian and 1st Ukrainian fronts, with the assistance of the troops of the left wing of the 2nd Belorussian and the right wing of the 4th Ukrainian fronts, were to carry out the Vistula-Oder strategic offensive operation. Its main goal is to complete the liberation of Poland and create the conditions for a decisive offensive against Berlin. The Warsaw-Poznan and Sandomierz-Silesian offensive operations were an integral part of the planned strategic plan. Zhukov spent almost the entire first half of November at the General Staff, where he was developing a plan for the final campaign of the war and, above all, operations in the Berlin direction. It was assumed that it was here that the enemy would put up the greatest resistance. Therefore, it was decided to launch an offensive in the direction of Vienna in

order to divert part of the Wehrmacht forces to the south. When developing offensive measures, they encountered a serious problem in East Prussia, where the enemy created powerful lines with a large number of permanent defensive structures and concentrated a large group of troops. Alas,

Stalin had to reap the fruits of the mistakes made by Stalin in the summer of 1944, when he considered that the defense in East Prussia would be broken through during the successfully developing Belorussian operation, and therefore did not agree with Zhukov's proposal to strengthen the fronts in this direction with the reserves of the Headquarters. Now it was necessary to prepare a new complex operation, and again Stalin did not agree with Zhukov, who proposed to strengthen the 2nd Belorussian Front, which was to act against the East Prussian enemy grouping, with at least one army. In mid-November, Zhukov arrived in Sedlec, where the headquarters

of the 1st Belorussian Front was located. Until the end of the month, together with the chief of staff of the front, M.S. Malinin, they finalized the offensive plan, prepared applications for the replenishment of troops and material and technical means. At the end of November, the plan for the Warsaw-Poznan operation with an estimated start date of January 15-20, 1945 was approved. General K.F. Telegin, a member of the military council of the 1st Belorussian Front,

recalls how Georgy Konstantinovich was perceived at the front: "From the first steps of his work as commander of the troops of the 1st Belorussian Front, G.K. creativity and cohesion of the entire management team, skillfully directed its efforts to solving problems. Operations were prepared by him with scrupulous care. He delved into all their aspects, worked out in detail, calculated, checked with the commanders of the military branches, heads of departments and services, with the command of the armies, lost on maps, relief plans. During the operation, the commander closely followed its development, strictly controlled and strictly demanded the implementation of the plan, orders, exacted for any disorganization, indiscipline. And this is true, although not all military leaders liked it. After all, we must not forget that the success of the operation is closely dependent on many factors and hitches in one sector immediately affect others ... In general, our front-line team paid tribute to the energy, perseverance and determination of G.K. Zhukov, his great organizational skills, military leadership talent, so fully unfolded in the final battles of the Great Patriotic War. 440 Developing a plan for the upcoming offensive, Zhukov comprehensively took into account the state of the enemy's defenses and troops. Speaking at the military scientific conference of the Group of Soviet Forces in Germany, organized in the hot pursuit of the events at the end of 1945, he recalled: "The troops of the 1st Belorussian Front did not take Poznan, a large operational-tactical center with a fortress. Part

of the forces of the front fought protracted battles in the Schneidemuhl area - this is also a fortress, reinforced with field installations. The front had in front of it the Pomeranian rampart and the Oder quadrangle. Units from the Baltic began to appear in Pomerania and there were serious signs that the enemy was creating a large grouping here. All this was the unfavorable conditions characterizing the situation."⁴⁴¹

⁴⁴⁰ Op. Quoted from: Svetlishin N. From Soldier to Marshal. (To the 70th anniversary of G.K. Zhukov.) // Military historical magazine. 1966. No. 11. S. 39.

⁴⁴¹ Speech by Marshal of the Soviet Union G.K. Zhukov at the military scientific

Georgy Konstantinovich made a decision, "taking into account the weaknesses of the enemy, namely, that he does not have an organized defense on the Oder quadrangle and on the Pomeranian rampart, and that it will take him at least ten days to bring troops ... to encircle the Schneidemühl and Poznań groups, free the rest forces and a swift blow to overcome fortified areas not ready for defense, reach the river. Oder, to seize the necessary bridgeheads in the interests of the subsequent operation, "that is," for a quick and swift strike on the last main strategic goal - on Berlin, since the end of the war was expected with the fall of Berlin.

Zhukov himself outlined his plan as follows: "a) To break through the enemy's front in several sectors with the task of destroying the opposing forces and means and preventing the enemy from offering us organized resistance in depth — that was the immediate goal of the Warsaw-Radom stage of the operation.

b) The main blow was delivered from the Magnushevsky bridgehead, so called the northern foothold ...

The main blow from this bridgehead gave us the opportunity to quickly maneuver to the rear of the Warsaw grouping, with the elimination of which we received the shortest communications and freedom of maneuver for the entire right flank, we got the opportunity to develop the blow, hiding behind the river. Wisla. Interacting with the troops of the 2nd BF (Belarusian Front. - V.D.), we went to the Bromberg-Poznan line in the shortest direction, from where a maneuver of the front with a turn to the north could be required. Finally, the terrain in this direction was the most favorable for the operations of large mechanized formations.

c) Simultaneously with the strike from the northern bridgehead, a strike similar in character and strength to the first was delivered from the southern bridgehead, which was occupied by the 69th Army ... We needed to strike such a force that the enemy on the first and second days of the operation, i.e. Before the introduction of our echelon of breakthrough development - tank armies, I could not determine where the main blow was delivered and where we should expect the development of success by tank troops. We succeeded in this thanks to the presence of a well-developed and well-executed plan to deceive the enemy, a camouflage plan. Finally, we needed to have a strong grouping here in order to carry out tactical interaction with the 1st UV (1st Ukrainian Front. - V.D.) with access to the Radom region to overwhelm the Shidlovets enemy grouping and eliminate it ... d) Strike to the north Warsaw was inflicted by the 47th Army and part of the forces of the 1st PA (1st Polish Army. - V.D.). The main grouping of the 1st PA

interacted with the 61st Army. The strike north of Warsaw was carried out in the interests of two fronts. Firstly, the 47th Army and the 1st PA had the task of clearing and eliminating the enemy's bridgehead on the eastern bank of the river. Wisla. Secondly, they fettered the Warsaw grouping, since this blow fell in close proximity to Warsaw. As a result of creating a threat from this side and pinning down the enemy forces, the latter was deprived of the opportunity to maneuver with his own forces towards the troops of our main attack, the enemy was not able to throw on the river. Pilica is at least part of his strength. IN

thirdly, this blow helped the 2nd BF, holding down the enemy forces, did not allow him to flank with his fire against the units of the 70th Army, which, according to the plan of the 2nd BF, were supposed to slide along the river.

Vistula". 442 To the plan of operation outlined by Georgy Konstantinovich himself, we add that the main blow from the Magnushevsky bridgehead in the direction of Kutno - Poznan was delivered by the forces of the 61st (General P.A. Belov), 5th shock (General N.E. Berzarin), 8th Guards (General V.I. Chuikov), 1st Guards Tank (General M.E. Katukov), 2nd Guards Tank (General S.I. Bogdanov) armies and 2nd Guards Cavalry Corps. From the Pulawy bridgehead, the 69th (General V.Ya. Kolpakchi) and the 33rd (General V.D. Tsvetaev) armies inflicted a blow in the direction of Radom - Lodz. In addition, it was planned to strike part of the forces on Shidlovets, in cooperation with the troops of the right wing of the 1st Ukrainian Front, to surround and destroy the enemy grouping in the Radom-Ostrovets area. An auxiliary strike was delivered by the 47th Army (General F.I. Perkhovich) north of Warsaw. The 1st Army of the Polish Army (General S.G. Poplavsky) had the task on the fourth day of the operation to go on the offensive and, in cooperation with the 47th, 61st and 2nd Guards Tank Armies, capture Warsaw. The 3rd shock army (General N.P. Simonyak) - the second echelon of the front - was given the task of developing success in Poznan, and the 7th Guards Cavalry Corps - the reserve of the front - was to be used in the Lodz direction.

By the beginning of the operation, in the breakthrough sectors, which in total account for only 13 percent of the total width of the offensive zone, Zhukov concentrated 54 percent of rifle divisions, 53 percent of artillery and mortars, over 90 percent of tanks and self-propelled guns, almost all aircraft. Having created an overwhelming advantage in the direction of the main

attack, it was necessary to ensure operational and tactical surprise. In order to misinform the enemy, as Zhukov put it, a "plan of deception" was carried out. On the left wing of the 1st Belorussian Front, the preparation of a breakthrough was simulated. For this, models of hundreds of tanks, guns and vehicles were exhibited, false airfields were built, and the appearance of increased railway traffic was created. And the enemy believed. From near Warsaw and Radom, he transferred here tank and motorized divisions, weakening his grouping in the main direction.

Later, the Chief of the General Staff of the Wehrmacht Ground Forces, General G. Guderian, wrote that before this offensive, "the superiority of the Russians was expressed by the ratio: in infantry 11:1, in tanks 7:1, in artillery pieces 20:1. If we evaluate the enemy as a whole, then we could speak without any exaggeration about his 15-fold superiority on land and at least 20-fold superiority in the air. generals did not pass even after the war. But the mistake of the Supreme High Command of the Wehrmacht in determining the direction of the main attack of the Soviet troops led to the fact that in the Warsaw-Berlin direction the density of forces and means of the German troops

442 Ibid. pp. 20-21.

443 Guderian G. Memoirs of a soldier. S. 523.

turned out to be one and a half to two times less than in other sectors of the Soviet German front. In total,

the troops of the 1st Belorussian Front numbered about 800 thousand people, over 14 thousand guns and mortars, more than 3 thousand tanks and self-propelled guns, 2190 aircraft. They were opposed by the German 9th Army of Army Group A (since January 26 - Center. - V.D.), which included about 143 thousand people, over 2 thousand guns and mortars, more than 700 tanks and assault guns. The enemy created in advance a deep, heavily fortified defense, which included the Oder-Neissen line 20-40 kilometers deep, which had three lanes, and the Berlin defensive area, which consisted of three ring contours - external, internal and urban.

Before dawn on January 14, Zhukov arrived at the location of the 5th shock army to direct the operation from the observation post of General Berzarin. At seven-thirty artillery preparation began, and twenty-five minutes later the assault battalions moved forward. By the end of the day, the divisions of the first echelon of the 5th shock managed to capture a small bridgehead on the Pilica River in the Palchev area. The troops of the 69th and 33rd armies advancing from the Puławy bridgehead had overcome the enemy's main line of defense by 1300 hours. After the commissioning of the 11th Panzer Corps, the second line of defense was also broken through. The next day, in the zone of the 33rd Army, Zhukov brought the 9th Tank Corps into the

breakthrough, and in the zone of the 8th Guards Army of V.I. Chuikov, the 1st Guards Tank Army of M.E. advanced 40–50 kilometers deep into the German defenses and captured the crossing over the Pilica River in the Sokul region (8–9 kilometers east of Nove Miasto). On the same day, the troops of the 69th and 33rd armies liberated Radom.

On January 16, the 47th army of General F.I. Perkhovich, having gone on the offensive, crossed the Vistula north of Warsaw on the move. In the zone of the 5th shock army, the 2nd Guards Tank Army of General S.I. Bogdanov and the 2nd Guards Cavalry Corps were introduced into the breakthrough. The German defense

was cracking at the seams. January 17

troops of the 47th, 61st and 2nd Guards Tank Armies together with the 1st Army of the Polish Army liberated Warsaw.

By this time, the troops of the 1st Ukrainian Front had defeated the enemy grouping in the Kielce region, crossed the Pilica and Warta rivers, and on January 18, having captured the city of Skarzhinsko-Kamenna, they joined forces with the troops of the 1st Belorussian Front. The main forces

of Army Group A were defeated. In this catastrophe, Hitler accused the commander of the group, General J. Harpe, who was replaced by a personal friend of the Fuhrer, General F. Scherner. The commander of the 9th Army, General S. Luttwitz, was also removed from his post.

Stalin, having received a report from Zhukov about the capture of Warsaw, ordered the 1st Belorussian Front "to continue the offensive in the general direction of Poznan and, no later than February 2–4, to capture the line of Bydgoszcz (Bromberg), Poznan."⁴⁴⁴ The troops of the 1st Ukrainian Front were

⁴⁴⁴ Russian archive: Great Patriotic War. Headquarters of the Supreme High Command: Documents and materials. 1944–1945 T. 16 (5–4). S. 191.

the task was set to reach the Oder with the main forces and seize bridgeheads on its western bank, and the left wing to capture Krakow and also advance to the Oder, bypassing the Dombrowski coal basin. The German command was forced to hastily transfer five infantry divisions to the east, including two from among those operating against the Anglo-American troops.

But, despite the stubborn resistance of the enemy, the main forces of the 1st Ukrainian Front nevertheless reached the Oder, and the formations of the 59th and 60th armies captured Krakow.

On January 19, troops of the 1st Belorussian Front occupied Lodz, and on January 22, the front's tank formations broke through to the Poznan defensive line and wedged deep into it.

On January 21, Zhukov reported to Stalin: "The task of the front until January 30, 1945 is to go to the front of Waldau ... Runau, Gretz. Tank armies to seize the areas by this time - 2 Guards. that (tank army. - V.D.) Berlinchen, Landsberg. 1 Guards that - Mezerets, Schvibus. At this turn, deploy troops (especially artillery), pull up the rear, put in order the material part of combat vehicles, deploy the 3rd shock and 1st Polish armies, from the morning of February 1-2, 45, continue the offensive with all the forces of the front with the immediate task cross the Oder on the move, and further develop a swift attack on Berlin, directing the main efforts to bypass Berlin from the northeast, north and northwest.

As a result of the successful development of the Warsaw-Poznan operation, Berlin becomes within reach. The main thing is not to delay. From the commanders of the 1st and 2nd Guards Tank Armies, Katukov and Bogdanov, Zhukov demands to get ahead of the enemy at any cost and prevent him from gaining a foothold on powerful defensive lines - reinforced concrete structures erected along the German border along the northern bank of the Neisse River and the western bank of the Oder: "Preemption the enemy in occupying these positions will ensure the successful and rapid conduct of the Berlin operation. If the enemy reserves have time to occupy the positions indicated by me, the Berlin operation may be delayed. 445 However, on January 22, due to lack of fuel, the main forces of the 2nd Guards Tank Army stopped in the Shubin area. At Poznan, with empty tanks, the 1st Guards Tank Army stood for two days.

On January 25, Zhukov informed Stalin that the enemy was demoralized and unable to offer serious resistance, so the offensive should continue towards the Oder. The main direction is Kustrin. Stalin expressed his fear that with the entry to the Oder, the troops of the 1st Belorussian Front would break away from the left wing of Rokossovsky by more than 150 kilometers. The fact that Zhukov had foreseen this option and was deploying his right wing in the northern and northwestern directions against the East Pomeranian group did not convince the Supreme Commander. First, Rokossovsky must complete the operation in East Prussia and regroup the main forces behind the Vistula; secondly, the troops of the 1st Ukrainian Front have not yet eliminated the German grouping in the Oppeln-Katowice area, and therefore will not be able to cover the left flank of the 1st Belorussian.

445 Op. In: The Great Patriotic War. 1941–1945 Military-historical essays. Book. 3. Liberation. S. 241.

Without waiting for Stalin to make a final decision, Zhukov continued to develop a swift offensive. "Seeing our weakness, Marshal Zhukov began to act even more decisively," General Guderian noted. - A blow to the Oder defensive lines was delivered by the 1st and 2nd Guards Tank Armies, the 8th Guards, 5th Shock and 61st Armies. In addition, the enemy still had sufficient forces for an offensive from the Nakel (Naklo), Bromberg (Bydgoszcz) area in a northerly direction, to the rear of our units defending on the Vistula line. 446 On January 29, 1945, Zhukov sends a new report to Stalin :

"Your order - to defeat the enemy grouping with a powerful blow to oppose the troops quickly during the days of offensive been carried out. For 17 front troops covered ^{And} battles on the German border - has ^{To} Polish lines cleared the population, five ^{400 km.} The entire western part of Poland, the strip of the 1st Belorussian Front, ^V before from the enemy, who had ^A Polish ^{With} been oppressed by the Nazis for half a year, was liberated. The rapid advance of the troops prevented the Nazis from destroying cities and industrial enterprises, destroying iron ones and did not give them the opportunity to destroy and highways, Polish population...

The main forces of the 1st Belorussian Front broke the resistance of scattered enemy units on the Mezeritsky fortified line and by February 1 reached the Oder, capturing an important strategic bridgehead near Kustrin. Berlin was 60–80 kilometers away. One tank throw. Everyone was impatiently waiting for the order: "To Berlin!" The military council of the 1st Belorussian

Front lowered the orientation of the army commanders: "The task of the front troops is to consolidate the success achieved in the next 6 days by active actions, pull up everything that is lagging behind, replenish supplies up to 2 fuel stations, up to 2 ammunition and take Berlin with a swift throw on February 15-16 ".447

However, the strike force formed in Eastern Pomerania of the new Army Group "Vistula" under the command of the Reichsführer SS Himmler was already preparing to rush into a wide corridor between the 1st and 2nd Belorussian fronts. To prevent a counterattack from the north - to the rear of the troops of Zhukov - Georgy, who had advanced to the Oder, timely received intelligence. Konstantinovich managed to create a powerful barrier in a dangerous direction, but there was no strength left to develop an offensive against Berlin. helped

On January 31, G.K. Zhukov sent to the Supreme Commander report:

"1. Due to the sharp lag of the left flank of the 2nd Belorussian Front from the right flank of the 1st Belorussian Front, the width of the front reached 500 km by the end of January 31.

If the left flank of K.K. Rokossovsky continues to stand still, the enemy will certainly take active steps against the stretched right flank of the 1st Belorussian Front.

I ask you to instruct K.K. Rokossovsky to immediately attack with the 70th Army

446 Guderian G. Memoirs of a soldier. pp. 561–562.

447 Zhukov G.K. Memories and reflections. T. 3. S. 200.

in a western direction, at least on a ledge behind the right flank of the 1st Belorussian Front. 2. I.S. Konev

(commander of the 1st Ukrainian Front. - V.D.) I ask you to oblige to quickly reach the river. Oder.”⁴⁴⁸ Zhukov did not receive an

answer. The troops of the 1st Belorussian Front had to fight until the end of February for the expansion and consolidation of bridgeheads on the Oder. At the same time, the troops of the

2nd Belorussian Front, with the participation of the right wing of the 1st Belorussian Front, fought heavy offensive battles in Eastern Pomerania. On February 16, Army Group Vistula launched a doomed attempt at a counteroffensive. M. Bormann, in a letter to his wife dated February 20, noted: “The offensive of Uncle Heinrich (Himmler. - V.D.) was not successful, or, more precisely, it did not develop as it should. Now the divisions he kept in reserve would have to be used elsewhere. This means that instead of a well-thought-out plan, one will have to improvise on the move.”⁴⁴⁹ Ultimately, Rokossovsky's armies liberated East Pomerania and reliably covered the right wing of the Soviet troops operating under Zhukov in the Berlin sector.

Despite the fact that the attack on Berlin was suspended, the successes of the Soviet troops caused a wide response abroad. On February 12, 1945, the American Life magazine published an article “Zhukov”, which noted: “Bypassing the nodes of resistance and leaving them to the rear units to eliminate them, Zhukov sped off his tank vanguards and motorized infantry in the first 18 days of the campaign through swampy and wooded areas more than 300 miles - a record speed of the offensive, significantly exceeding the pace of the German offensive in 1941. The military power of the Soviet Union, as well as the doom of Nazi Germany, was not in doubt. Wehrmacht General F. Mellenthin wrote after the war: “It is impossible to describe everything that happened between the Vistula and the Oder in the first months of 1945. Europe has not yet known anything like it since the fall of the Roman Empire.”⁴⁵⁰ By the Decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR of March 30, 1945, G.K.

This decree was issued in the days when the Berlin strategic operation was being prepared. Unfortunately, it was not possible to take Berlin in one breath in February. The proximity of the capital of Germany turned out to be deceptive for many, which gave rise to undeserved reproaches against Zhukov. Georgy Konstantinovich himself balanced and reasonably assessed the situation at that time at the aforementioned military scientific conference at the end of the 45th year, when the events were still fresh in memory

⁴⁴⁸ Ibid. S. 197.

⁴⁴⁹ Op. Quoted from: Manvell R., Frenkel G. The standard-bearer of the "Black Order". Himmler / Per. With English M., 2000. S. 342.

⁴⁵⁰ Mellenthin F. Tank Battles: Combat Use of Tanks in World War II war. S. 413.

participants in the Vistula-Oder operation:

"Of course, Berlin did not have a strong cover during this period. On the western bank of the river The enemy had only separate companies, battalions, separate tanks on the Oder, therefore, there was no real defense along the Oder yet. It was known. It was possible to launch the tank armies **of Bogdanov** and **Katukov** straight into Berlin, they could go to Berlin. The question, of course, would they be able to take it, it's hard to say. But it was necessary to be able to resist the temptation - this is not an easy task. The commander should not lose his head, even with success. Do you think Com. Would **Chuikov** not want to jump out to Berlin, or **did Zhukov** not want to take Berlin? It was possible to go to Berlin, it was possible to abandon mobile troops and approach Berlin. But ... it would be impossible to go back, since the enemy could easily close the escape routes. The enemy would have easily broken through our infantry with a blow from the north, and reached the river crossings. Oder and would have put the troops of the front in a difficult position. I emphasize once again that you need to be able to control yourself and not be tempted, in no case go on an adventure. The commander in his decisions should never lose his common sense.⁴⁵¹ In a polemic with V.I. Chuikov in 1965, I.S. Konev described the events as follows: . After the successful Vistula-Oder operation in the 1st

Ukrainian, we thought to quickly reach Berlin. When they crossed the Oder, they planned to develop the

operation on Berlin. The Headquarters supported us and informed us that the 1st Belorussian Front was planning the same. This made us even more obligated to take offensive actions. But life has changed. We immediately felt strong resistance from the enemy. Before us were German divisions, transferred from the west, from the flanks, from the reserve. And the fascist troops, defeated in the Vistula-Oder region, were again reformed. A new front of defense emerged with an organized fire system, with appropriate reserves. Attempts by some of our armies to break through the enemy's defenses were not successful. The left flank of the 1st Ukrainian Front failed to advance at all. I had to bring Rybalko's tank army into battle ahead of time. I receive information that the 1st Belorussian Front, having reached the Oder, suspended the offensive in connection with the actions of the enemy's Pomeranian grouping. The 2nd Ukrainian Front was delayed in the Carpathians.

Our troops were physically tired, there were significant losses in men and tanks. Rifle divisions consisted of 3-4 thousand people. We had only 50-60 percent of combat-ready tanks. The rear is stretched for 500 km. Delivery is limited. Ammunition remained at the Sandomierz bridgehead. There was no gasoline for the attack. Hungry rations in everything. And the cities before us are fortified like fortresses. To take them, a lot of ammunition was needed, especially heavy shells. But they weren't enough. I reported to Headquarters (there is a document) and asked that the operation be limited to reaching the Neisse line. The bet gave "good". With all our activity, including mine, we could not attack. The 1st Belorussian Front also abandoned the offensive. If we

⁴⁵¹ Speech by Marshal of the Soviet Union G.K. Zhukov at the military scientific conference of the SVG in November - December 1945//Military Thought. 1985 Spec. issue S. 33.

advancing, it is not known what would have happened.

Yes, a very difficult situation could arise. And the Germans would certainly use it to their advantage. For example, they would let the allies into Berlin ... "Frankness deserves respect, and therefore

inspires confidence

the point of view expressed at the same meeting by K.K. Rokossovsky:

"I had a major conversation with Stalin when I was transferred from the 1st Belorussian Front to the 2nd Belorussian Front, and Zhukov was appointed commander of the 1st Belorussian Front. I expressed my dissatisfaction with my new appointment. Stalin asked: "What, Zhukov is less literate than you?" "No," I say, "he is your deputy." "Well, that's it!" said Stalin. Stalin further explained: "Three fronts are being created, which are entrusted with the task of ending the war.

These three must work together. If Zhukov is delayed, you will help him from the north. Your direction is also very important. The 3rd Belorussian Front aimed its strike along the sea, it contacted the East Prussian grouping and cannot help the attack on Berlin. But I did not help Zhukov either. Waging heavy battles, our front was too stretched. The gap between the 1st and 2nd Belorussian fronts reached 70 km. The Germans had the opportunity to hit this gap. I myself raised the question before the Headquarters about how to cut the Pomeranian group with the help of Zhukov. The headquarters agreed to reinforce us. In cooperation with the right wing of the 1st Belorussian Front, we cut and destroyed the enemy's Pomeranian grouping. In that situation, there could be no other solution. Comrade Chuikov, in his speech, tried to prove that the Germans in February 1945 did not have enough troops. And why did the 1st Belorussian Front trample on the Berlin direction for a long time, if the enemy had no forces? No, the Germans had a lot of forces, that's why they put up serious resistance. If in

February 1945 an offensive had been launched on Berlin, it could have failed, and it is not yet known what kind of relations we would have developed with the Allies. We're 'fighting' in vain right now."

The opinion of Marshal V.D. Sokolovsky looks just as balanced and impartial: "The idea to continue the

attack on Berlin came from the command of the 1st Belorussian and 1st Ukrainian fronts. We ourselves decided to advance until the enemy brought up reserves. On February 8, we launched this operation with the main forces. The operation developed relatively successfully. In 3-4 days we advanced 60 km, and approached the river. Neisse. Expanded the breakthrough to 200 km. But on the Neisse we ran out of steam, we could not capture a single bridgehead on the move. The operation was poorly supplied with ammunition. We had 50-60 percent of them. The situation was especially bad for 3 TA, which, moreover, moved from south to north. There was not enough food, fuel. People are tired. We walked to Neisse without a break 700 km. The left flank of the front did not advance, it was distracted by Silesia. Under these conditions, the 1st Ukrainian Front could not go to the Neisse, and without them the 1st Belorussian Front could not advance either. Thus, in February there were no conditions for the development of an offensive against Berlin. I support Ivan Stepanovich Konev that the dispute about the possibility of taking Berlin in February 1945 is pointless.

... On March 29, G.K. Zhukov, on a call from the Stavka V GK, flew by plane

Moscow. Due to bad weather, the plane made an emergency landing in Minsk, and Georgy Konstantinovich traveled the rest of the way by train. From March 31 to April 3, he worked at

Headquarters and the General Staff on the plan for the Berlin operation. Receiving Zhukov,

Stalin noted that the German front in the west had finally collapsed, and, apparently, the enemy did not want to take measures to stop the advance of the allied forces. Meanwhile, in all the most important areas against the Soviet troops, he is strengthening his groupings.

By this time, Stalin had a personal message from the Supreme Commander of the Allied Forces in Europe, General D. Eisenhower. He reported that his plans included the encirclement and defeat of the German troops defending the Ruhr, as well as the isolation of the area from the main part of Germany. "I expect," Eisenhower noted, "that this phase (of the operation) will be completed at the end of April, and perhaps earlier, and my next task will be to cut the enemy troops by connecting with your armies." Eisenhower did not plan to take Berlin. This can also be seen from his letter to the Chief of Staff of the US Army, General D. Marshall: "Any time when we can take Berlin without heavy losses, we, of course, will do it. But I think it is unwise, from a military point of view, to make Berlin the main target under the circumstances ... Given the fact that the war is being fought for political purposes, and if the Joint Chiefs of Staff decide that the capture of Berlin by the troops of the Western Allies matters more, than purely military considerations in this theater, then I will readily make the necessary changes to my plans ... "On April 1, Stalin sent a reply to Eisenhower: "I received your telegram of March 28, 1945. 1. Your plan for dissecting the German forces by joining the Soviet troops with your troops completely coincides with the plan of the Soviet High Command. 2. I also agree with you that the area of Erfurt, Leipzig, Dresden should be the place of connection between your and Soviet troops. The Soviet High Command thinks that the main blow of the Soviet troops should be delivered in this direction.

3. Berlin has lost its former strategic importance. Therefore, the Soviet High Command is thinking of allocating secondary forces towards Berlin. 4. The plan for the formation of a second

additional ring by connecting Soviet and your troops somewhere in the area of Vienna, Linz, Regensburg is also approved by the Soviet High Command.

5. The beginning of the main attack of the Soviet troops approximately - the second half of May. As for the additional strike on the Vienna, Linz area, it is already being carried out by the Soviet troops. However, this plan may be subject to change depending on changes in the situation, for example, in the event of a hasty withdrawal of German troops, the time frame may be reduced. A lot also depends on the weather. 6. The question of improving communication between our troops is being studied by the General Staff, and the corresponding decision will be announced later.

7. As for the enemy troops on the eastern front, then

found that their number is gradually increasing. In addition to the 6th SS Panzer Army, three divisions from Northern Italy and two divisions from Norway were transferred to the eastern front. 452

The answer did not contain exact information about the direction of the main attack and the time of the start of the offensive of the Soviet troops - Stalin was well aware of the political significance of the capture of Berlin, and did not seek to spur the allies to this. Stalin's answer played its role:

Eisenhower rejected Montgomery's insistent request for ten divisions to be allocated to him for an offensive on Berlin, moreover, he transferred from the 21st Army Group, commanded by Montgomery, the 9th American Army to the General's 12th Army Group Bradley. He shared Eisenhower's point of view, believed that the capture of Berlin would cost about 100,000 soldiers' lives, and this is "too high a price for a prestigious object, especially considering that we will have to transfer it to others." The Committee of Chiefs of Staff, and then President F. Roosevelt, supported Eisenhower's decision.

British Prime Minister W. Churchill thought otherwise. On April 1, he sent the following telegram to the President of the United States:

"Nothing will have such a psychological impact and will not cause such despair among all German resistance forces as an attack on Berlin. For the German people, this will be the most convincing sign of defeat. On the other hand, if a ruined Berlin is left to withstand a Russian siege, then it must be borne in mind that as long as the German flag flies there, Berlin will inspire the resistance of all Germans under arms. Besides, there is another aspect of the matter which you and I should consider. The Russian armies will undoubtedly capture all of Austria and enter Vienna. If they take Berlin, will they

not get a too exaggerated idea that they have made an overwhelming contribution to our common victory, and might this not lead them to a frame of mind that will cause serious and very significant difficulties in the future? Therefore, I think that from a political point of view we should move as far east as possible in Germany, and that in the event that Berlin comes within our reach, we must certainly take it. This seems reasonable from a military point of view as well."453

But this telegram from W. Churchill was, in essence, the last attempt to achieve a revision of Eisenhower's decision on the offensive of the troops of the Western Allies in the direction of Leipzig and Dresden.

At the same time, in Moscow, at the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command, the details of the plan for the Berlin operation were discussed. After the reports of A.I. Antonov, G.K. Zhukov and I.S. Konev, it was decided to launch an attack on Berlin on April 16, without waiting for the support of the 2nd Belorussian Front, whose main forces were solving the task of eliminating enemy groups in the Danzig area and

452 Op. Quoted from: History of the Great Patriotic War of the Soviet Union, 1941–1945. M., 1963. V. 5. S. 257.

453 Churchill W. World War II / Per. from English. M., 1955. T. 6. S. 443.

Gdynia. Zhukov was to advance in the early days with an open right flank, but it was impossible to wait - Stalin received information that the German leadership had become more active in the search for separate agreements with the British and American governments. It seemed very likely that the Germans would stop all resistance in the west and open the way for the Anglo-American troops to Berlin, if only not to surrender it to the Russians. During a meeting with Stalin, Konev said that his troops also want to participate in the storming of Berlin, and the

dividing line between them and Zhukov's front does not allow this. The Supreme Commander, approaching the map, crossed out part of the dividing line passing southwest of Berlin: let the city be stormed by the one who breaks into it first. Zhukov feared that this would require additional coordination of interaction, otherwise the troops of the fronts would mix up and control would be disrupted, as was already the case near Kharkov in 1943. Konev took Stalin's gesture in his own way:

"While drawing this line with a pencil, Stalin suddenly cut it off at the city of Lübben... He cut it off and didn't take it any further. He did not say anything at the same time, but I think Marshal Zhukov also saw a certain meaning in this. The dividing line was cut off approximately where we were supposed to go by the third day of the operation. Further (obviously, depending on the situation) it was tacitly assumed that the command of the fronts could take the initiative. For me, in any case, the stoppage of the boundary line on Lübben meant that the speed of the breakthrough, the speed and maneuverability of actions on the right wing of the front, could later create a situation in which our attack from the south on Berlin would be advantageous. Was there an unspoken call for a competition of fronts in this cliff of the dividing line on Lübben? I admit such a possibility ... "454 The next day after the meeting at the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command, Stalin signed

Directive No. 11 059 for the 1st Belorussian Front:

"The Headquarters of the Supreme High Command orders: 1.

Prepare and conduct an offensive operation with the aim of capturing the capital of Germany, the city of Berlin, and no later than the twelfth to fifteenth day of the operation, reach the river. Elbe.

2. Apply the main blow from the bridgehead to the river. Oder west of Kustrin with four combined arms and two tank armies. Attract five or six artillery divisions of the breakthrough to the breakthrough site, creating a density of at least 250 barrels from 76 mm and higher per one kilometer of the breakthrough front.

3. To ensure the main grouping of the front from the north and from the south, deliver two auxiliary strikes with the forces of two armies each. The first is from the region northwest of Berwalde in the general direction to Eberswalde, Verbellin; the second - from the bridgeheads on the river. The Oder is north and south of Frankfurt an der Oder in the general direction to Fürstenwalde, Potsdam, Brandenburg, bypassing Berlin from the south. 4. Enter tank armies in the

direction of the main attack after breaking through the defense to develop success bypassing Berlin from the north and north east.

454 Konev I. S. Notes of the Front Commander. pp. 303–304.

5. Use the second echelon army to develop success in the main direction. 6. Dividing lines: - with the 2nd Belorussian Front - in accordance with the directive of the Headquarters

No. 11 053 dated April 1, 1945;

- with the 1st Ukrainian Front from 04/15/1945 to Unrushtadt - the former, then the lake. Ensдорfer See, Gross-Gastrose, Lübben (all points, except Lübben, for the 1st Belorussian Front inclusive).

7. Responsibility for providing joints with the 2nd Belorussian and 1st Ukrainian fronts - the former.

8. The beginning of the operation - according to the instructions received by you personally. Headquarters of the Supreme High Command

I. Stalin A.

Antonov. 455 To the Commander of the 1st Ukrainian Front by the directive of the Headquarters

No. 11 060 prescribed:

"..Prepare and conduct an offensive operation in order to defeat the enemy grouping in the Cottbus region and south of Berlin. Not later than 10–12 days of the operation, capture the Beelitz, Wittenberg line and further along the river. Elbe to Dresden. In the future, after mastering Berlin, keep in mind the attack on Leipzig.

... Establish from 04/15/1945 the following dividing line with the 1st Belorussian Front: to Unrushtadt, the former and further on Lake. Ensдорfer See, Gross-Gastrose, Lübben (all points, except Lübben, for the 1st Belorussian Front inclusive) ... "456 At the time when the Soviet troops were preparing to storm Berlin, General Eisenhower visited the headquarters of the advanced American

armies. The commander of the division, which went out to the Elbe, bravely reported: "We are moving forward and will enter Berlin. Nothing will stop us." Eisenhower didn't mind: "Come on! I wish you every success and don't let anyone stop you." On April 12, the division reached the Elbe, where it was stopped by cadets of German military schools. Feeding in his heart the hope of concluding a separate peace with the Western powers, Hitler in every possible way suppressed defeatist moods among the German command. Upon learning that in January 1945 Guderian expressed unequivocal doubts to Ribbentrop about the successful outcome of the war, he harshly declared:

"I most
I categorically forbid generalizations of the future by anyone who It remains And conclusions V respect
considered a traitor - whole. tells anyone else that the war is lost will be prerogative. in the situation as a
regardless of his rank and position
with all the ensuing consequences for him and his family

457

Now Hitler needed to stop the advance of the Red Army at any cost. He threw all the main forces into the defense of the lines along

455 Op. Quoted from: Russian archive: Great Patriotic War. Supreme Command Headquarters: Documents and materials. 1944–1945 T. 16 (5–4). S. 223.

456 Ibid. S. 225.

457 Op. by: Bullock A. Hitler and Stalin: The life of the great dictators: In 2 vols. T. 2. Ch. 12–20 / Per. from English. Smolensk: Rusich, 2000. S. 539.

Oder and Neisse, creating the most powerful and deep defensive echelons against the troops of the 1st

Belorussian Front. Recall that beyond the Oder-Neissen border, the Berlin defensive area was equipped in advance, which included three ring bypasses around the capital of Germany.

The troops of the Vistula and Center Army Groups holding the defense in the Berlin direction numbered about 1 million people, 10,400 guns and mortars, 1,500 tanks and assault guns. The actions of the ground forces were supported from the air by 3,300 combat aircraft of the 6th Air Fleet and the Reich Air Fleet.⁴⁵⁸ Eight divisions were in the reserve of the High Command of the Ground Forces, and about 200 Volkssturm battalions were formed in Berlin itself.

The total number of Soviet troops participating in the Berlin operation was 2.5 million people. They were armed with 41.6 thousand guns and mortars, 6250 tanks and self-propelled guns, 7500 combat aircraft.⁴⁵⁹

Before the start of the operation on the Kyustra bridgehead (44 kilometers along the front and about 10 kilometers deep), from where the main blow was delivered, Zhukov concentrated the 47th, 3rd and 5th shock, 8th guards armies and 9th tank corps in a short time. On April 14 and 15, reconnaissance in force was carried out in the zone of the 1st Belorussian and on the night of April 16 on the 1st Ukrainian fronts. During the two-day battles, units and units of the 1st Belorussian Front in some places wedged into the enemy defenses to a depth of 5 kilometers. However, it was not possible to fully take into account and analyze the data obtained as a result of reconnaissance in force on the measures carried out by the enemy. Late at night on April 16, a few hours before the

start of the operation, Zhukov arrived at the location of the 8th Guards Army at the command post of V.I. Chuikov. At 5 o'clock in the morning, the silence was broken by the roar of thousands of shells and mines, the roar of explosions and the roar of bombers. It seemed that nothing alive should remain in the positions of the enemy, flooded with a sea of fire, metal and smoke. To top it all off, 147 powerful searchlights blinded the enemy soldiers. When the artillery fire was brought to its highest limit, behind the cover of a double shaft of fire, the infantry and tanks moved into the attack.

However, the enemy fought fiercely. "By 13 o'clock I clearly understood," recalled Georgy Konstantinovich, "that the enemy's fire defense system had basically survived here and in the battle formation in which we launched the attack and were advancing, we could not take the Seelow Heights. In order to strengthen the blow of the attacking troops and certainly break through the defenses, we decided, after consulting with the commanders, to bring into action both tank armies of Generals M.E. Katukov and S.I. Bogdanov . about your decision. An order followed to support the strike of tank armies

⁴⁵⁸ See: Great Patriotic War. 1941–1945 Military-historical essays. Book. 3. Liberation. S. 269.

⁴⁵⁹ Ibid. S. 270.

⁴⁶⁰ Zhukov G.K. Memories and reflections. T. 3. S. 242.

bomber aircraft, and in the evening report on how things turn out.

The tank armies, intended to develop success, were drawn into protracted battles and could not take the Seelow Heights on the move. In the evening, when Zhukov contacted Headquarters again, Stalin was extremely harsh. Georgy Konstantinovich promised to break through the defenses at the Zeelovsky line by the end of the next day.

Returning later to the analysis of the Berlin operation, Zhukov noted:

"There were mistakes. However, it must be admitted that we made a mistake that dragged out the battle when breaking through the tactical zone. In preparing the operation, we somewhat underestimated the area of the Seelow Heights, where the on one or two days. complexity of the terrain, the enemy had the opportunity to organize a formidable defense. our especially on the reverse slopes of the heights, the enemy, V starting lines, being deep 10-12 kilometers on the ground, breaking in, was able to save his forces of fire from our artillery bombing aircraft. True, we had an extremely limited time to V from prepare for the Berlin operation, an excuse. Blame myself" V behind And equipment for from And But And This Not can serve as a flaw in the behind question first of all i have to take 461

But this understanding came later. And in the midst of the battle, the blame fell on Zhukov's subordinates. At half past eight on the evening of April 17, he signed the following order:

"1. Worst of all, the offensive Berlin operation is carried out by the 69th Army under the command of Colonel General Kolpakchi, 1 TA (tank army. - V.D.) under the command of Colonel General Katukov and 2 TA under the command of Colonel General Bogdanov. These armies, having colossal forces and means, the second day

act clumsily and indecisively, trampling before a weak opponent. Commander Katukov and his corps commanders Yushchuk, Dremov, Babadzanyan do not observe the field and the actions of their troops, sitting far in the rear (10-12 km). These generals do not know the situation and lag behind events.

2. If we allow slowness in the development of the Berlin operation, then the troops will be exhausted, they will use up all their material reserves without taking Berlin. I demand: a) Do not hesitate to develop the swiftness of the offensive. The 1st and 2nd tank

armies and the 9th tank corps (tank corps. - V.D.) to break through with the support of the 3rd, 5th and 8th guards. armies to the rear of the enemy's defenses and rapidly advance into the Berlin area. Bypass all large settlements and road junctions, bearing in mind that in these places the enemy will have a strong anti-tank defense (anti-tank defense. - V.D.). Tank armies should not be scattered along the front and act with their fists. b) All army commanders should be on the NP (observation post. - V.D.) of corps commanders fighting in the main direction, and corps commanders should be in brigades and divisions of the first echelon in the main direction. Being in the rear of the troops is strictly prohibited.

c) All artillery, including BM (high power. - V.D.), pull up to the first echelon and keep it no further than 2-3 km behind the echelon leading the battle. Artillery actions should be concentrated on those sectors where the breakthrough task is being solved.

3. Keep in mind that until Berlin itself, the enemy will resist and cling to every house and bush, and therefore tankers, self-propelled gunners and infantry will not have to wait until the artillery kills all the Germans and gives them the pleasure of moving through the clear space.

4. Beat the Germans mercilessly and move forward day and night to Berlin, then Berlin will be ours very soon. Zhukov Telegin. 462 In the evening of the

same day, the commander of the 1st Ukrainian Front, Konev, reported to the Headquarters that his tank armies, which had crossed the Neisse on the eve, began to break away from the combined arms armies and move deep forward in a northwestern direction. Stalin proposed that Zhukov's mobile troops be let in through the gap formed on the sector of the 1st Ukrainian Front. But Konev considered that this would take a long time and create great confusion, and therefore it would be better to turn the two tank armies of the 1st Ukrainian Front to Berlin in the direction of Zossen (25 kilometers south of Berlin). Stalin agreed with this proposal. "The 1st Byelorussian Front itself could need tank armies — and subsequently needed them — after breaching the enemy defenses in another direction," wrote Konev. - The tank armies of our front, having entered the gap, in fact, were already ready to strike at Berlin. They only needed to be turned, or, as I said, "turn" in the right direction. Now, when they were actually already entering the operational space, such a "reversal" was not a big deal, especially since the command of the tank armies was ready to carry out just such a task. 463 After a conversation with Stalin, the commander of the 1st Ukrainian Front immediately ordered 3th and 4th Guards Tank Armies turn to Berlin. On the evening of April 20, Konev sent the following order to the commanders of these armies, P. S. Rybalko and D. D. Lelyushenko:

"The troops of Marshal Zhukov, 10 km from the eastern outskirts of Berlin. I order you to be the first to break into Berlin tonight.

Deliver execution. Konev

Krainyukov. A little

later, Zhukov signs order No. 10 624, sent
Commander of the 2nd Guards Tank Army:

"The 2nd Guards Tank Army is entrusted with a historic task: to be the first to break into Berlin and hoist the banner of Victory. I have instructed you to organize the execution.

Send one of the best brigades from each corps to Berlin and set them the task of breaking through to the outskirts of Berlin no later than 4 am on April 21 at any cost and without delay conveying to Comrade Stalin the announcement in the press for a report. Zhukov Telegin.

462 Op. Quoted from: Krasnov V.G. Unknown Zhukov. pp. 442–443.

463 Konev I. S. Notes of the Front Commander. S. 327.

A similar order was given to the commander of the 1st Panzer Army. The rivalry between the commanders of the fronts began to go beyond the limits of wisdom and balance in decision-making. Tank formations of both fronts with great difficulty overcame the massive defenses on the outskirts of Berlin.

After the war, Marshal of the Soviet Union A.M. Vasilevsky expressed his opinion on the use of tank armies during the storming of Berlin. "In close cooperation with the combined arms, these armies broke through 3 defensive lines of the Oder-Neissen line," he wrote, "acted independently when carrying out a maneuver to encircle the Berlin group from the north and south; participated in the storming of Berlin, maintaining their own lines of action. The experience of this operation once again convincingly showed the inexpediency of using large tank formations in a battle for a large settlement; they lose their main advantages here - striking power and maneuverability. 464 On April 21, units of the 3rd shock (General V.I. .I. Perkhovich) of the armies of the 1st Belorussian Front, overcoming the fierce resistance of the enemy, broke through to the outskirts of Berlin and started a battle in the city. By

the end of the same day, the 8th Guards (General V.I.

Chuikov) and the 1st Guards Tank Army (General M.E. Katukov) also wedged into the city defensive bypass. On April 19 and 20, the 3rd and 4th Guards Tank Armies of the 1st Ukrainian Front advanced 95 kilometers and reached the approaches to Berlin from the south. April 21

The 3rd Guards Tank Army broke into the southern outskirts of Berlin, and the 4th Guards Tank Army entered the southern approaches to Potsdam. Using their success, the combined-arms armies of the shock group of the front quickly moved to the west. The first news about the breakthrough of Soviet troops on

the outskirts of the German capital was sent from the headquarters of the 1st Ukrainian Front:

"Moscow, tov. Stalin, personally.

1.3 Guards. TA Rybalko advanced brigades broke into the southern part Berlin and by 17.30 is fighting for Teltow and in the center of Lankwitz.

2. 4th Guards TA Lelyushenko - 10 TC is fighting in the Zarmuth area (10 km southeast of Potsdam).

22.00 22.4.45. Konev.

The successful actions of the 1st Ukrainian Front forced the German command to turn the 12th Army against Konev's troops, which was intended to contain the American troops. In the Yuterbog area, it was supposed to join up with the German troops of the 9th Army and part of the forces of the 4th Panzer Army, which were making their way to the west. To strike at the Soviet formations that bypassed Berlin from the north, it was planned to use the army group of SS Obergruppenführer F. Steiner. From April 20 to April 26, units of the 2nd Army of the Polish Army and the 52nd Army

(General K.A. Koroteev), advancing in the Dresden direction, repelled a strong counterattack of three infantry, two tank and one motorized divisions from the Görlitz area, which ensured the further offensive of the main grouping of the 1st Ukrainian Front.

On April 26–30, large formations of the 1st Belorussian and 1st Ukrainian fronts surrounded and liquidated the 200,000-strong Frankfurt-Guben grouping of the enemy with attacks in converging directions.

However, the German troops defending Berlin continued to offer fierce resistance. On April 23, Berlin radio broadcast Goebbels' statement that the Führer himself took over the leadership of the city's defense, and this gives the battle for the capital a European significance. According to Goebbels, the entire population came to the defense of Berlin, and party members armed with panzerfausts, machine guns and carbines took up posts at street intersections.⁴⁶⁵ On the same day, the command of the 1st Belorussian Front offered the Berlin garrison to surrender, but there was no

answer. Meanwhile, a new object of rivalry arose between Zhukov and Konev - Brandenburg, in the area of \u200b\u200bwhich the troops of the

47th Army of the 1st Belorussian Front and the 3rd Guards Tank Army of the 1st Ukrainian Front were to join. Zhukov, striving to be the first to capture Brandenburg, demanded on April 25 at 1 am from the commander of the 7th Guards Cavalry Corps: "6 MK of the 1st Ukrainian Front on the way to the city of Brandenburg from the south

east.

The front commander ordered: One cavalry division with one tank brigade to immediately turn for a swift strike to the south with the task of occupying the city of Brandenburg before the approach of 6 microns - by the morning of 25.4.45. The TA has been ordered to send one brigade from the town of Natsen to the town of Schwanebeck at your disposal. The main forces of the corps to continue the offensive on the city of Rathenow and carry out the previously assigned task. Malinin.

Despite Zhukov's demand, the 4th Guards Tank Army was the first to reach Brandenburg on the evening of April 24. The next day, its advanced units connected in the Ketzin area, northeast of Brandenburg, with the advanced units of the 47th Army of the 1st Belorussian Front and closed the encirclement around Berlin. Konev immediately sent a report to I.V. Stalin:

"To the Supreme Commander-in-Chief Marshal of the Soviet Union Comrade Stalin 4th

Guards. the tank army of Lelyushenko, developing the offensive of 6 microns, captured the mountains. Ketzin and at 23.30 24.4.45 in the Bukhov-Karptsov area (6 km northeast of the city of Ketzin) joined with units of the 1st Belorussian Front, thereby completing the encirclement of the mountains. Berlin from the West. 6 MK 4 Guards TA at 23.00 24.4 completely mastered the mountains. Brandenburg Konev Krainyukov

Ref. 205 April 25, 1945 01.00.

On April 25, the troops of the 1st Ukrainian Front met on the Elbe with

⁴⁶⁵ See: Great Patriotic War. 1941–1945 Military-historical essays. Book. 3. Liberation. S. 281.

troops of the 1st American Army. At this time, the troops of the 2nd Belorussian Front crossed the West-Oder and broke through the defenses on its western bank, pinning down the enemy's 3rd Panzer Army and depriving it of the opportunity to launch a counterattack from the north against the Soviet troops surrounding Berlin.

The refusal of the Berlin garrison to lay down their arms cost the inhabitants of the German capital dearly. On the day of the 25th and on the night of April 26, more than two thousand bombers of the 16th and 18th air armies delivered three massive attacks on Berlin.

Meanwhile, the rivalry between Konev and Zhukov continued. Rybalko's 3rd Guards Tank Army crossed the Spree River on the move and advanced towards the center of Berlin with fierce fighting. Since the dividing line between the troops of the fronts was changed and ran approximately through the center of the city, Rybalko's units ended up in the rear of the combat formations of the 8th Guards and 1st Guards Tank Armies of the 1st Belorussian Front. Confusion began, about the possibility of which Zhukov warned

Stalin during the discussion of the plan for the Berlin operation. About two days passed before Konev turned to Zhukov with a request to take measures to correct the situation:

"The troops of the army of comrade Rybalko and comrade Luchinsky today, on April 28, 1945, fought their right flanks to the Antalsky railway station (the right front demarcation line), with a ledge and the left flank are fighting for Wilmersdorf, Holensee. According to the report of Comrade Rybalko, the armies of Comrade Chuikov and Comrade Katukov of the 1st Belorussian Front received the task of advancing northwest along the southern bank of the Lantver Canal, so they cut the battle formations of the troops of the 1st Ukrainian Front advancing to the north.

I ask for orders to change the direction of the offensive of the armies of comrade Chuikov and comrade

Katukov. Please let me know about your decision. Konev Krainyukov
Petrov No.

00222 / op April 28, 1945 20.45.

On the same evening, Zhukov, ignoring Konev's appeal, sent a telegram to Stalin, in which he indicated: "Two rifle divisions of the 28th Army and one MSBR of the 3rd Guards. TA of the 1st Ukrainian Front, having the task of advancing from Art. Pale Strasse (one and a half kilometers west of Tempelhof Airport) to the north along the railway, on April 28, 1945, they went to the rear of the combat formations of the 8th Guards. A and 1 Guards. TA. The offensive of Konev's units in the rear of the 8th Guards. A and 1 Guards. TA created confusion and mixing of parts, which made it extremely difficult to control the battle. Their further advance in this direction may lead to even greater mixing and difficulty in management. Reporting the above, I ask you to establish a dividing line between the troops of the 1st Belorussian and 1st Ukrainian fronts or allow me to change units of the Ukrainian front in Berlin. Who is right, who is wrong? Konev complains that Zhukov's formations are "cutting the battle formations" of the troops of the 1st Ukrainian Front. Zhukov blames Konev

for the confusion. Stalin achieved his goal by crossing out the dividing line southwest of Berlin. Having organized an unnecessary competition of fronts, he managed to "push foreheads" of two commanders at a time when the outcome of the war was completely a foregone conclusion.

At the same time, he did not forget the 41st, when he wanted to give Konev to the tribunal for the collapse of the Western Front. Zhukov defended. And Konev, and Moscow.

Stalin looked to the future, and there, in the halo of the Victor, he saw only himself. To rule, one must be able to divide. Let's pay tribute to Joseph

Vissarionovich: he understood psychology subtly and was well aware that glory for commanders who came out of the people's hinterland also means a lot ... Only realizing that confusion in the management of fronts could

lead to Stalin finally determined
to grave consequences, the dividing line:

"Directive of the Headquarters of the Supreme High Command No. 11 077 by the commander of the troops of the 1st Belorussian and 1st Ukrainian fronts on changing the demarcation line

April 28, 1945 at 21:20 The

Headquarters of the Supreme High Command orders: Tempelhof,
Victor-Louise Platz, st. Savigny, then by rail to st. Charlottenburg, St. Westkreuz,
st. Rule-ben (all points for the 1st Ukrainian Front inclusive). 2. Report on the given orders. Headquarters of the Supreme High Command I. Stalin A. Antonov. 466

By this time, units of the 3rd Guards Tank Army had reached the Tiergarten. Now their place was to be taken by the troops of the 1st Belorussian Front. In his memoirs, Konev writes: "The telephone conversation that I had with Pavel Semenovitch (Rybalko. - V.D.) about this was rather unpleasant. He stated that he did not understand why the corps, already aimed at the center of the city, on my order, turned away to the west, changed the direction of the offensive. I understood well the experiences of the commander, but I could only answer that the offensive of the troops of the 1st Belorussian Front on Berlin was successful, and the center of Berlin, along the established dividing line, was included in the zone of operations of the 1st Belorussian Front. 467

After the war, I.S. Konev wrote: "It is known that Zhukov did not want to hear that anyone other than the troops of the 1st Belorussian Front participated in the capture of Berlin ... Zhukov was extremely annoyed that the soldiers of the 1st Ukrainian Front 22 April appeared in Berlin. He ordered General Chuikov to watch where our troops were advancing. VCh Zhukov contacted the commander of the 3rd Panzer Army Rybalko and scolded him for appearing with his troops in Berlin, considering this as an illegal form of action shown by the 1st Ukrainian Front. 468 Was everything really like that or not, one thing is clear: the relationship between the commanders of the two fronts during

466 Op. Quoted from: Russian archive: Great Patriotic War. Supreme Command Headquarters: Documents and materials. 1944–1945 T. 16 (5–4). S. 232.

467 Konev I. S. Notes of the Front Commander. S. 408.

468 Ibid. pp. 503–504.

The Berlin operation left much to be desired and did not benefit the cause. On April 30, the 79th

Rifle Corps of the 3rd Shock Army of the 1st Belorussian Front began fighting for the Reichstag. On the same day at 10:30 pm Moscow time, reconnaissance artillerymen of the 136th Army Cannon Artillery Brigade Senior Sergeants G.K. Zagitov, A.F. Lisimenko, A.P. Bobrov and Sergeant M.P. assault group of the 79th Rifle Corps, headed by Captain V.N. Makov, hoisted a banner on the roof of the Reichstag (on the sculptural figure "Goddess of Victory") . After 2-3 hours, also on the roof of the Reichstag (on the sculpture of the equestrian knight - Kaiser Wilhelm), by order of the commander of the 756th Infantry Regiment of the 150th Infantry Division, Colonel F.M. Zinchenko, scouts, Sergeant M.A. Egorov and junior Sergeant M.V. Kantaria, who were accompanied by Lieutenant A.P. Berest and machine gunners from the company of Senior Sergeant I.Ya. Syanov. On May 2, this banner was transferred to the dome of the Reichstag as the Banner of Victory.

Despite the apparent futility of resistance, Hitler stubbornly refused to admit his defeat. On April 28, he ordered the locks on the Spree to be opened to flood the underground, where thousands of Berliners were hiding. At the same time, the Fuhrer rejected the proposal of the commandant of Berlin, General Weidling, to break through to the west, to the Anglo-American troops. He still hoped for outside help, kept asking when the troops would release the capital. On April 30, Field Marshal Keitel radioed that the 9th Army was unable to break out of the encirclement, and the 12th Army could not advance on the capital. This meant the end. On the same day, Hitler committed suicide. On May 1, the troops of the 3rd Shock Army, advancing from the north, met south of the Reichstag with units of the 8th Guards Army, advancing from the south. By 3 pm on

May 2, enemy resistance had completely ceased, and the remnants of the Berlin garrison surrendered. The fight against separate groups trying to break through to the west ended on May 5th.

On May 2, Stalin signed an order for the troops of the Red Army and the Navy: "The troops of the 1st

Belorussian Front under the command of Marshal of the Soviet Union Zhukov, with the assistance of the troops of the 1st Ukrainian Front under the command of Marshal of the Soviet Union Konev, after stubborn street fighting, completed the defeat of the Berlin group of German troops and today, May 2, completely captured the capital of Germany, the city of Berlin - the center of German imperialism and the center of German aggression.

The Berlin garrison, which was defending the city, led by the chief of defense of Berlin, General of Artillery Weidling and his headquarters today, at 15 o'clock, ceased resistance, laid down their arms and surrendered to
captivity.

On May 2, by 21 o'clock, more than 70,000 German soldiers and officers were captured by our troops in the city of Berlin To

commemorate the victory, the formations and units that distinguished themselves in the battles for capturing Berlin should be submitted for assignment

the name "Berlin" and to be awarded orders. Today, May 2, at

11:30 p.m., in honor of the historic event - the capture of Berlin by Soviet troops - the capital of our Motherland, Moscow, on behalf of the Motherland, salutes its valiant troops of the 1st Belorussian and 1st Ukrainian fronts with twenty-four artillery volleys from three hundred and twenty-four guns .

For excellent military operations, I express gratitude to the troops of the 1st Belorussian and 1st Ukrainian fronts, who participated in the battles for the capture of Berlin. Eternal glory to

the heroes who fell in the battles for freedom and independence
our motherland! Death to the German invaders!

Supreme Commander-in-Chief

Marshal of the Soviet Union I.

Stalin May

2, 1945. 359."470 From May 3

to May 8, the troops of the 1st Belorussian Front went to the Elbe, and the 1st Ukrainian Front began to complete the liberation of Czechoslovakia. The 2nd Belorussian Front, pursuing the remnants of the defeated 3rd Panzer Army, reached the Baltic Sea on May 2, and on May 3-4 - to the Elbe line, where it established contact with the British 2nd Army. The resistance of the German troops was finally broken. During the Berlin operation, Soviet

troops defeated 70 infantry, 23 tank and motorized divisions, destroyed most of the Wehrmacht aviation, captured about 480 thousand people, captured about 11 thousand guns and mortars, more than 1500 tanks and assault guns, 4500 aircraft.⁴⁷¹ Losses Soviet troops were: irrevocable - 78,291 people (4.1 percent of the total), sanitary - 274,184 people.⁴⁷²

The human losses of the Soviet troops, as evidenced by other independent studies, were incommensurably less than the German ones. But if you set out to prove Zhukov's "mediocrity" by any means, you can do without numbers. As does, for example, B. V. Sokolov, who writes completely groundlessly: "The losses of the Red Army in the Berlin operation, contrary to Zhukov's assertion, were, as always, not less, but more than German ones."⁴⁷³ We lost a lot of tanks - about two thousand. Tanks are not for frontal attacks on reinforced concrete fortifications

and street fights. It is likely that this could have been foreseen if it were not for the forced haste: Berlin in those days became a goal not so much a strategic one as a political one. This goal was achieved - German fascism ceased to exist. The third "Gold Star" of the Hero of the Soviet Union - well-deserved

⁴⁷⁰ Op. Quoted from: Orders of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief during the Great Patriotic War of the Soviet Union. From January 25, 1943 to September 3, 1945. Moscow, 1975, pp. 494-497.

⁴⁷¹ History of World War II 1939-1945. M., 1979. T. 10. S. 344.

⁴⁷² See: Russia and the USSR in the Wars of the 20th Century: A Statistical Study. S. 307.

⁴⁷³ Sokolov B. Unknown Zhukov: a portrait without retouching in the mirror of the era. S. 488.

assessment of Zhukov's contribution to the defeat of the Nazi troops in the Berlin region and the victorious end of the war. On May 7, Georgy Konstantinovich received a

telegram signed by I.V. Stalin and A.I. Antonov: "To the Deputy Supreme Commander-in-Chief Marshal of the Soviet Union Zhukov G.K. The

Headquarters of the Supreme High Command authorizes you to ratify the protocol on the unconditional surrender of the German

armed forces.⁴⁷⁴ The signing of the act of surrender took place on the night of May 8-9 in the building of the former military engineering school in the southeastern district of Berlin Karlshorst. On the German side, K. Doenitz, who, according to

Hitler's will, took the post of Reich Chancellor, authorized Field Marshal W. Keitel, Chief of Staff of the Wehrmacht High Command, General Field Marshal W. Keitel, Commander-in-Chief of the Navy, Admiral of the Fleet X. Friedeburg and Colonel General of Aviation G. Stumpf, to do this. The armed forces of the anti-Hitler coalition, in addition to G.K. Zhukov, were represented by: from the High Command of the Allied Expeditionary Forces - Air Chief Marshal A. Tedder (Great Britain), as witnesses - the commander of the US strategic air forces, General K. Spaats and the commander-in-chief of the French army, General J. de Latre de Tassigny.

This historic document consisted of six points and contained provisions for the unconditional surrender of all German armed forces on land, sea and air, as well as all other forces that were at that time under German command. The German High Command was obliged to immediately issue orders to all its troops on the cessation of hostilities from 2300 hours (Central European time) on May 8, 1945, complete disarmament and transfer of all weapons and military equipment to local allied commanders or officers allocated by them. The German side was forbidden to destroy or damage any ships, aircraft, their engines, hulls and equipment, as well as vehicles, weapons, apparatus and all military-technical means of warfare.

The act of surrender of Germany was signed on May 9 at 0 hours 43 minutes by Moscow time.

Chapter XIII. Round and round

A resonant wave rolled across Red Square, the fraction of eighty drums. Damp cloths dragged helplessly along the wet cobblestones. Hanging on the shafts lowered to the ground, two hundred banners of the fascist troops defeated on the battlefields were thrown to the foot of the Mausoleum. The first is the standard of Adolf Hitler.

The Victory Parade, which took place on a rainy day on June 24, was hosted by Zhukov. Having left the Spassky Gates on a white horse, Georgy Konstantinovich accepted the report of the commander of the parade, Marshal of the Soviet Union K.K. Rokossovsky, and after the performance of the hymn "Glory to the Russian people", he delivered a welcoming speech from the podium of the Mausoleum.

⁴⁷⁴ Op. by: Volkogonov D.A. Triumph and tragedy / Political portrait of I.V. Stalin. In 2 books. M., 1990. Book. II. S. 337.

The combined regiments of the Karelian, Leningrad, 1st Baltic, 3rd Belorussian, 2nd Belorussian, 1st Belorussian, 1st Ukrainian, 4th Ukrainian, 2nd Ukrainian, 3rd Ukrainian fronts and the Navy. The order in which the fronts passed was determined by their position in the theater of operations by the end of the war—from north to south.

By the way, the idea to hold a Victory Parade in Moscow to commemorate the victory over Nazi Germany was expressed by Stalin on May 19, 1945 at a meeting of members of the State Defense Committee and the General Staff. She was immediately warmly supported, and then no one doubted that the parade should be hosted by the Supreme Commander. But later, according to the memoirs of Georgy Konstantinovich, on June 18–19, Stalin

invited him to the dacha. Asking if Zhukov had forgotten how to ride a horse, Stalin instructed him to host the Victory Parade.

Why did Stalin refuse to host the parade himself? In his memoirs, Zhukov told the following:

"Next day I went on
The central airfield to see how the training was going met Stalin's son Vasily. interesting story: To parade. There He
- I'm telling you a big secret. Father himself was took me aside and told
preparing to receive the Victory

Parade. an incident happened. On the third day of the inept use of spurs, the horse carried his father, grabbing
his mane, trying to stay in the saddle, hurting his shoulder in the fall. in riding arena. Father, from

By and fell.

but he failed, and

and head, old when he got up, he spat and said:

He trooper " ".475

When Georgy Konstantinovich hosted the Victory Parade, he was already in the status of commander of the Group of Soviet Occupation Forces in Germany and representative of the Soviet Supreme High Command in the Control Council for the Occupation of Germany.

The first official meeting of the Control Council was scheduled for 5 June. Apparently, not everything was smooth and calm, since the day before, Zhukov demanded that the army commanders "work out plans for raising units, units, formations and armies on alert ... Build and develop defensive structures only at night and, in extreme cases, in the process of planned exercises defense in small units. All trenches built and under construction, communication passages, OPs, OPs (observation posts and firing positions. - V.D.) and other engineering structures by dawn must be carefully camouflaged from the local population and Allied observation. Do not mine the area until further notice.

Before the start of the meeting of the Control Council, Army General D. Eisenhower presented Zhukov with the highest military award - the Legion of Honor medal, which was awarded to him by the American government. Eisenhower highly appreciated George Konstantinovich and believed that he "had the greatest experience in leading the greatest battles than anyone else in our time ... It is clear that he was the greatest commander." In a narrow circle, Eisenhower assured W.

Harriman that "my friend Zhukov will be Stalin's successor, and this will open an era of good relations" between the USSR and the USA. Recalling the meeting at Zhukov's headquarters, he noted that he gave "the impression of a friendly person with excellent military bearing."⁴⁷⁶

Georgy Konstantinovich spoke about some important details of that meeting in his "Memoirs and Reflections": "In the beginning, the conversation

revolved around past events. D. Eisenhower spoke about the great difficulties in conducting a landing operation across the English Channel to Normandy, difficulties in arranging communications, in command and control, and especially in the event of an unexpected counteroffensive of German troops in the Ardennes.

Getting down to business, he said: "We will have to agree on a whole series of questions connected with the organization of the Control Council and the provision of ground communications through the Soviet zone to Berlin for the personnel of the USA, Britain and France. - Apparently, it will be necessary to

agree not only on ground communications, - I answered D. Eisenhower, - we will have to resolve the issues of the order of flights to Berlin by American and British aviation through the Soviet zone. To this, General Spaatz (commander of the American strategic

aviation. - V.D.), leaning back in his chair, casually threw:

- American aviation flew everywhere and flies without any restrictions. "Your aviation will not fly

through the Soviet zone without restrictions," I answered Spaatz. - You will fly only in the established air corridors.

Here D. Eisenhower quickly intervened and said to Spaatz: - I did not instruct you to put the question of aviation flights in this way. And then, turning to me, he remarked: "Now I have come to you, Mr. Marshal, in order to personally get acquainted, and we will resolve business issues when we organize the Control Council. "I think that we, like old soldiers, will find a common

language and work together," I answered. - And now I would like to ask you only one thing: to quickly withdraw American troops from Thuringia, which, according to the agreement at the Crimean Conference between the heads of the allied governments, should be occupied only by Soviet troops. — I agree with you and I will insist on it, — D. Eisenhower answered... Outwardly, D. Eisenhower made a good impression on me.

To me

I liked his simplicity, ease and sense of humor "

⁴⁷⁷

The friendly nature of relations between Zhukov and Eisenhower was almost broken by a serious hitch with the opening of the meeting of the Control Council. Georgy Konstantinovich was waiting for an important order from Moscow, and this expectation began to go beyond the bounds of decency. General Eisenhower, no

⁴⁷⁶ Eisenhower D. Crusade to Europe / Per. from English. Smolensk: Rusich, 2000. S. 494.

⁴⁷⁷ Zhukov G.K. Memories and reflections. T. 3. S. 314–315.

intending to waste time, announced that he would leave Berlin if the meeting did not start within the next half hour.

The meeting opened ten minutes later. Its participants signed the Declaration on the defeat of Germany and the adoption of supreme power in the country by the governments of the USSR, the USA, England and France. In accordance with this Declaration, as well as the decisions of the Crimean (Yalta) Conference of the Heads of Government of the USSR, the USA and England (February 1945), the establishment of the Control Council was formalized to exercise supreme power in Germany during its occupation and fulfill the basic requirements of unconditional surrender. The council included representatives of all four countries - the commanders-in-chief of the occupation forces in the zones of occupation of these countries. The supreme power in the Soviet zone of occupation was exercised by the Soviet Military Administration in Germany (SVAG). The apparatus of the SVAG was headed by the Commander-in-Chief (aka Commander-in-Chief) G.K. Zhukov.

After signing the Declaration, Zhukov invited those present to a banquet. "I told Zhukov that

I would have to return to Frankfurt that evening, and quite early to land there before dark," Eisenhower recalled. - He asked me to agree to a compromise and go to the banquet hall for a couple of toasts and listen to two songs performed by the Red Army Ensemble. He promised me a quick passage through the city to the airfield, saying that he himself would go with me to the airfield and see that there were no delays.

Marshal's hospitable gesture towards his allies made me regret that I could not stay here any longer. The Red Army Ensemble performed wonderful songs, and the banquet table was full of Russian delicacies. Before I left, Marshal Zhukov announced that he had just received instructions from Moscow, approved by Generalissimo Stalin, to present Field Marshal Montgomery and myself with the Russian Order of Victory, an award that no foreigner had ever received before. The marshal asked when I would like to hold the ceremony of presenting this order, and I invited him to visit my headquarters in Frankfurt. He accepted the invitation and was pleased when Montgomery tactfully remarked that since he had been under my command during the entire campaign in Europe, he, too, would like to receive this award on my headquarters. 478

The Eisenhower and Montgomery award ceremony took place on June 10. About how the reception on this occasion took place, in Montgomery's memoirs, excessive goodwill is not visible: "Late in the morning, Zhukov arrived with a large retinue, consisting mainly of photojournalists and reporters. The award ceremony took place in Eisenhower's office. Then, on a large balcony, Zhukov awarded medals to 24 British and American officers of the headquarters of the Supreme Allied Command. It was a completely disorganized and undignified spectacle, with photographers all the time jumping around looking for the right position to shoot. However, the awards, in the end, were successfully presented, although it seemed to me that in that situation, those who were not given medals could freely receive them.

intended. Before

dinner, about 1,700 American and British aircraft flew in formation over us to demonstrate the air power of the West, which could not fail to impress the Russians. During lunch, the Americans put on a colorful cabaret show with flowing music and intricate dance performed by topless black women. The Russians had never seen or heard of anything like it, and their eyes popped out of their heads. Nevertheless, they liked it very much, and they called the artists for an encore all the time. The entire daily routine was carefully planned, and the Russians experienced the generous hospitality of the Americans. It was a day of display of American wealth and power."

Eisenhower retained a warmer impression of the event: "It was a beautiful summer day, and first we led the guests to a large open balcony, where we were treated to wine and snacks before breakfast, and at this time, as planned, held an air parade with the participation of a large number aircraft of our aviation, believing that Marshal Zhukov would take this as a manifestation of deep respect for him. From the nearest airfields we raised hundreds of fighters, followed by bombers of every type we had. In clear, sunny weather, it turned out to be an impressive sight, and it seemed that it made a great impression on Zhukov. In accordance with Russian custom, as far as we knew it, toasts were proclaimed during breakfast. Marshal Zhukov was a master of toasting, or at least that was how he seemed to us then, and his statements through an interpreter did credit to the allies and gave rise to hope for the success of our cooperation in the future. Everyone took turns proclaiming their toasts - the British, the Americans, the Russians and the French. We must have risen at least ten times to toast."⁴⁷⁹ The British government also decided not to be indebted. At the end of June, Field Marshal Montgomery presented Georgy Konstantinovich with the Order of the Bath, 1st class, and the Grand Cross.

In the subsequent period, Zhukov was completely busy preparing the Potsdam Conference of the leaders of the USSR, the USA and Great Britain, which took place from July 17 to August 2, 1945. Stalin, who led the Soviet

delegation, arrived in Potsdam in a good mood and, without hiding his satisfaction, said: "It feels like our troops have done a tasteful job on Berlin. On my way I saw only a dozen surviving houses. It will continue to be so with all lovers of military adventures. The American delegation was headed by US President Harry Truman, the British delegation by British

Prime Minister W. Churchill, and from July 28 by C. Attlee, who replaced him in this post. The conference was attended by foreign ministers, military advisers and experts.

The three powers confirmed that "German militarism and Nazism will be eradicated" so that the threat of aggression will never again come from German soil. The complete demilitarization and disarmament of Germany was announced - the abolition of all its land, sea and

⁴⁷⁹ Ibid. S. 496.

air forces, SS, SA, SD and Gestapo with all their organizations, headquarters and institutions, educational institutions, military and paramilitary organizations. All weapons and ammunition must be destroyed or transferred to the allies. All Nazi laws were repealed in the country, Nazi and militaristic propaganda was banned, and everyone who participated in the planning and implementation of Nazi atrocities was put on trial. The economic principles approved by the conference participants provided for the elimination of the entire military industry, the prohibition of the production of weapons, military equipment, military aircraft and sea vessels of all types. Strict control was introduced over the production of metals, chemical products and other items necessary for the war economy.

Considering it unacceptable to save military-economic
potential of Germany, the US and British delegations did not agree, however, with the proposals of the USSR delegation to establish joint control of the four great powers (including France) over the Ruhr area - the military and economic base of German militarism. Germany was divided into zones of occupation by the troops of the USSR, the USA, Great Britain and France. Special agreements on reparations confirmed the right of the peoples who suffered from German aggression to compensation and determined the sources for receiving reparation payments. The delegations decided that all four powers would receive reparations from their zones of occupation and at the expense of German investments abroad, the USSR in addition to this - 25 percent of all industrial equipment withdrawn from the western zones (of which 15 percent in exchange for equivalent supplies of coal, food and other goods). From its share of reparations, the USSR satisfied the reparations claims of Poland. At the suggestion of the USSR delegation, a decision was made to equally divide the German navy and merchant fleet between the USSR, the USA and Great Britain no later than February 15, 1946 (most of the submarines were subject to sinking at the proposal of the British delegation). It was decided to transfer the city of Königsberg (since 1946 - Kaliningrad) and the area adjacent to it to the USSR. Part of East Prussia, as well as the city of Danzig (Gdansk), departed to Poland. The US and British delegations were forced to recognize the Polish Provisional Government of National Unity.

The conference considered the question of the main war criminals and reaffirmed the intention of the three powers "to bring these criminals to a speedy and just trial." The conference specified the competence of the Control Council in Germany, which is called upon to exercise the supreme power of the four allied powers - the USSR, the USA, Great Britain and France - during the period when Germany fulfills the basic requirements of the Act of Surrender of the Armed Forces of Nazi Germany, the Declaration on the Defeat of Germany, as well as the decisions of the Potsdam Conference. The Soviet delegation reaffirmed the readiness of the USSR to fulfill its obligations assumed at the Crimean (Yalta) conference regarding the entry of the USSR into the war against Japan.

At a reception given by Churchill, who lost the parliamentary elections, before his departure from Potsdam, a curious incident occurred. The retired British prime minister unexpectedly proposed a toast to Zhukov's health. "I had no choice but to propose my return toast," recalled Georgy Konstantinovich. - Thanks to

W. Churchill for the kindness shown to me, I mechanically called him "comrade". He immediately noticed the bewildered looks of I.V. Stalin and V.M. Molotov and was somewhat embarrassed. However, he quickly recovered and, improvising, proposed a toast to "comrades in arms", our allies in this war - soldiers, officers and generals of the armies of the anti-fascist coalition, who so brilliantly completed the defeat of fascist Germany ... The next day, when I was at I.V. Stalin, he and all those present laughed at how quickly I acquired a "comrade" in the person of W. Churchill."⁴⁸⁰

After the end of the Potsdam Conference, G.K. Zhukov had to prepare the visit of General D. Eisenhower to the Soviet Union. The initiator of this visit was I.V. Stalin. "The Generalissimo suggested that the date of August 12 be included in the scope of my visit," Eisenhower recalled. - It was the day of the national sports festival in Moscow. I was glad that I had the opportunity to see a country I had never been to before, but I was even more glad that it meant that the Soviet government was just as interested in developing friendly contacts as we were. I quickly agreed and was informed that I would officially be Marshal Zhukov's guest during my stay in Moscow and that he would accompany me from Berlin to Moscow.⁴⁸¹ Zhukov accompanied Eisenhower on his trip to Moscow and Leningrad. Eisenhower captured a remarkable episode in his memoirs *Mandate for Change*: "Stalin, the boss who ruled the Soviet Union with an iron fist, was

completely devoid of a sense of humor ... In the evening in the cinema we watched a Soviet film about the capture of Berlin, where my old friend Marshal Zhukov was also shown with many orders and medals on the dress uniform. During the demonstration of the film, Stalin sat between me and Zhukov. At one point, I turned and said to our interpreter, who was sitting behind Stalin, "Tell Marshal Zhukov that if he ever loses his job in the Soviet Union, he can, as this picture proves, surely find a job in Hollywood." Stalin silently listened to the translator. "Marshal Zhukov," he told me evenly, "will never be left without a job in the Soviet Union." However, it is difficult to say who, in this case, had the subtler humor. It gradually became clear that Russians and Americans had different attitudes not only to humor. On August 14, on the eve of Eisenhower's departure from Moscow, the American ambassador hosted a reception in his honor. The head of the US military mission in Moscow, General John R. Dean, recalled that, after drinking and eating, Zhukov and Eisenhower launched into a friendly argument about freedom of the press: "The result revealed a fundamental

difference in their thinking. Eisenhower stated our position very well, but Zhukov was not impressed. He was the product of a generation that never knew any semblance of individual freedom, and no argument could justify in his eyes the unconditional freedom to express one's feelings and thoughts orally or in writing, even if they may be contrary to the interests of the state.

⁴⁸⁰ Zhukov G.K. *Memories and reflections*. T. 3. S. 336.

⁴⁸¹ Eisenhower D. *Crusade to Europe*. S. 514.

The allies had different attitudes towards holding a joint military parade in Berlin, which was supposed to demonstrate their unity. On September 7, 1945, the troops of the USSR, the USA, England and France lined up near the Brandenburg Gate. The atmosphere of what was happening was quite accurately captured by the driver of Georgy Konstantinovich A.N. Buchin. "Marshal Zhukov, in full dress uniform, drove around the lined up troops, standing in an

open Packard, which I happened to lead," A. N. Buchin recalled. - An exciting sight. Alas, the Western governments did not want to send their top commanders in occupied Germany. What to do, Georgy Konstantinovich took a seat on the podium, delivered a speech befitting the occasion, and the troops of four powers marched in front of him. The Western powers did not withdraw the equipment, they trampled the units that carried the occupation service in their sectors in Berlin. The Scots looked rather comical, healthy legs with bare knees from under plaid skirts.

Our troops were magnificent, they demonstrated impeccable drill skills. It was hard to believe that veterans of the Great Patriotic War, who were used to fighting, and not marching in full parade, marched in front of the podium, minting a step. The ground trembled when the equipment went - heavy tanks and self-propelled guns.

This is the testimony of a Soviet soldier. But what the American wrote researcher U. Spar in his book about G.K. Zhukov:

"The day of the parade was approaching, and then Zhukov was informed that the commanders-in-chief of the other three powers would not be able to attend and would send their deputies. When Zhukov reported this to Stalin, the dictator attributed it to the desire of the Allies to downplay the parade of the anti-Hitler coalition troops. He ordered Zhukov to take the parade himself. From Zhukov's point of view, the parade was successful and achieved its goal. The parade reached another. The Soviets were able to show the latest models of tanks

and self-propelled guns to high-ranking allied commanders. D. Eisenhower, with the consent of the US government, invited Zhukov to visit America. "Consent was immediately obtained, and we thought

that the Marshal would go to the United States as soon as possible," Eisenhower writes in his book Crusade to Europe. "He asked that General Clay or I go with him so that he would have a friend by his side during his visit to my country, just as he accompanied me during my trip to Russia. I told him that due to special circumstances and problems at the moment I could not go with him, but agreed that General Clay would go with him. Marshal Zhukov asked if my son John could accompany him as an adjutant. I told him that it would be a great honor for John, moreover, I would be happy to send them on my C-54 aircraft, which I myself constantly use. This pleased Marshall. He had already flown this plane through Russia and believed in its reliability and the skill of the crew. Unfortunately, Marshal soon fell ill. It was rumored that this was supposedly a diplomatic illness, but when I saw him at the next meeting of the Control Council in Berlin, he had the appearance of a man,

suffered a serious illness.”⁴⁸²

Marshal Zhukov also refers to his illness: “Unfortunately, before the flight, I fell ill. I had to call I. V. Stalin again: “It’s impossible to fly in this state. Connect with US Ambassador Smith and tell him that the flight is canceled for health reasons.”⁴⁸³ Still, the cancellation of the visit to the US most likely had diplomatic overtones. For example, these days

Eisenhower received a message from his political adviser R. Murphy, who reported that the employees of the American embassy in Moscow saw Zhukov in the theater, clearly in good health.

The fact that Zhukov’s “illness” was diplomatic is also confirmed by his daughter Ella: “Father was deeply upset when he could not pay a return visit to the United States at the invitation of Eisenhower. Stalin initially supported the idea of a visit, but then, for reasons that can only be guessed at, changed his mind. “Unfortunately, before the flight I fell ill,” my father writes in his memoirs... But we knew that the illness was diplomatic in nature. We realized that he was, in fact, forced to abandon the desired trip. It is possible that in this way he was pointed to the place. The Marshal's popularity worried Stalin more and more. He probably knew that in order to paint a portrait of Zhukov, the famous artist P.D. Korin traveled to Germany.

And after all, the work was a success: on it, Georgy Konstantinovich, as in life, looks strong-willed, taut in a military way, the orders on his chest are like steel armor, the blue marshal's uniform is cast with metal. And in the face, and in a strong stocky figure, something iron, unbending is seen. Everything is felt: in front of you is a person who is used to making responsible decisions, managing huge masses of people. All of it is the embodiment of power and military order, to which millions of lives, millions of destinies are subordinated.

During his stay in Germany, Korin was deeply impressed by one incident: he saw our soldiers throwing the most valuable books out of the house of a German professor. Zhukov intervened and stopped the disgrace. The psychology of a winner in occupied land is a

complicated thing. At the same time, when Korin was painting a portrait of Zhukov, E.V. Vuchetich presented Georgy Konstantinovich with his own life-size bronze bust. The words were engraved on the monument:

“I could not weave the victorious
crown of the Laurel branch
into you, But I will try to convey
Your bright image until the centuries.

To the glorious Russian commander of the 20th century, Marshal G.K. Zhukov, in memory of our short meetings. Sculptor Vuchetich. November 1945 Berlin.

⁴⁸² Ibid. S. 522.

⁴⁸³ Zhukov G.K. Memories and reflections. T. 3. S. 352.

The last meeting between G.K. Zhukov and D. Eisenhower took place at a reception given by the Soviet side in Berlin on November 7, 1945. Eisenhower, who received the order to return to the United States, noted: "When I arrived, Marshal Zhukov, with his wife and several senior assistants, were standing in the center of the hall, receiving guests. He greeted me and then quickly left the center of the hall. The marshal took his wife by the arm, and the three of us retired to a cozy room, where the table was set with the most delicious appetizer. The conversation went on for two hours. The general tone of Marshall's remarks was that, in his opinion, we in Berlin had achieved something to solve the difficult problem of establishing mutual understanding between two countries as culturally and politically different as the United States and the Soviet Union. Marshall thought we could do even better. He talked a lot about the United Nations and remarked: "If the United States and Russia stand together, no matter what the difficulties, the success of the UN will be assured. If we are partners, then there will not be a country on earth that would dare to start a war when we impose a ban on it." 484 Zhukov told the military historian Svetlishin about his work as the Commander-in-Chief of the SVAG and Commander-in-Chief of the Group of Soviet Occupation Forces in Germany: "There were many concerns. I realized how difficult diplomacy is. It was necessary to immediately disarm the remaining German troops, arrest the leaders of fascism, organize the administration of the state, the work of local authorities. It

was necessary to feed the hungry, war-weary German people." 485 These are just some of the issues that had to be addressed

George Konstantinovich.

On May 31, 1945, he signs the resolution of the military council of the 1st Belorussian Front "On the supply of milk to the children of the mountains. Berlin". It contains a whole range of complex issues related to the restoration of agricultural production, the veterinary service, the organization of the work of dairies, dairy points, and transport. Among those responsible: Deputy Commander Serov, Generals Zhizhin and Antipenko, Colonel Tkachev ... On October 26, Zhukov sends, as especially important, an order to the military councils of the armies: take with them.

In the meantime, many of these subsidiary farms will be divided among the peasants after the departure of the units, in accordance with the land reform, or else handed over to the factories. Seizure of

implements can harm the sowing and the cause of land reform. In this regard, I order: You ensure
that those who are relocating or
leaving

484 Eisenhower D. Crusade to Europe. S. 523.

485 Op. Quoted from: Svetlishin N. Marshal Zhukov: Steep steps of fate // Soviet warrior. 1988. No. 8. S. 15.

parts of the inventory of former subsidiary farms and the transfer of this inventory to local burgomasters.

If the subsidiary farms are transferred to new military units, then the inventory is transferred to their representatives. 486 monastery in the city of

Erfurt.⁴⁸⁷ In mid-August 1945, in Karlshorst, the leadership of the Soviet military administration in Germany held a meeting with the heads of departments and departments of the SWAT. As the former head of the NVA department of the land of Thuringia, General Kolesnichenko, recalled,

"in the speech of the deputy commander-in-chief of the SVAG, General of the Army V.D. were very important and subject to unconditional fulfillment. In conclusion, the commander-in-chief of the SVAG, Marshal of the Soviet Union G.K.

manifestations of indiscipline and rude attitude towards the local population. At the end of September 1945, he sent a targeted order to the commanders and heads of the political departments of the formations: "There was a signal about the outrageous facts of looting,

excesses, self-will committed by your subordinates. On the island of Rügen and in other places of deployment areas, there were cases of seizure of livestock, horses and carts, household property from the population, and furniture was taken away from apartments. In Stralsund, two barges are illegally loaded with household items to be sent to a new location. Military commandants who prevent these facts of arbitrariness are subjected to insults, death threats, and one

assistant to the commandant was tied up and thrown into a ditch. All this indicates that you personally do not want, apparently, to maintain proper order in the area of deployment of units, do not really

fight for the honor and dignity of the guardsmen, personally indulge in these outrages and self-will. I categorically warn you personally that if the atrocities and self-will are not immediately stopped, you will be removed from your post and severely punished ... "⁴⁸⁹

After some time, the military councils of the armies and the commanders military branches sent another secret directive:

"Your measures to combat looting and arbitrariness

486 Op. Quoted from: Krasnov V. G. Unknown Zhukov. S. 450.

487 See: Lagodsky S. Vasily Sokolovsky: commander, strategist, diplomat. M., 1995. S. 237.

488 Op. Quoted from: Kolesnichenko I.S. Battle after the war. M., 1987. S. 38.

489 Op. Quoted from: Krasnov V. G. Unknown Zhukov. pp. 448–449.

unsatisfactory. The

outrages do not stop, order and discipline in the troops require more persistent and cruel measures of command, especially 2 UA, 47 A and 5 UA. On the roads, the redeployed troops

move out of formation, a huge number of privates, sergeants and officers on bicycles and motorcycles.

The commanders of the units and formations apparently do not want to restore proper order in their units, violate the discipline of the formation on the march, are not interested in where the subordinates get bicycles, motorcycles and for what need the messengers arbitrarily leave the formation ... "490 While Zhukov was engaged in the affairs of

the Soviet military administration, in Nuremberg on November 20, 1945, the trial of a group of major Nazi war criminals began. During the process, the defender of the General Staff and the High Command of the Wehrmacht, lawyer Dr. Hans Laternser, sent a petition to the International Military Tribunal "for the reclamation of an affidavit given under oath" from Zhukov. The defense believed that "Marshal Zhukov, as an expert on military issues, must answer" a number of questions. The questions posed were of an alternative nature and occupied several pages. The essence of the wording is expressed in paragraph 7: "Can the highest military leader in wartime refuse to carry out an order given to him, against which he unsuccessfully objected?" The document went on to say:

"If the defense is able to obtain proof that in the Soviet Army the military leaders also did not have the opportunity to influence the final decisions of their government and that foreign policy issues and other politically and militarily necessary measures were completely excluded from the range of issues subject to them personal consideration, then this, in the opinion of the defense, will have a huge impact on the correctness of the decision made regarding similar actions of the German command.

If the principle also holds in the Soviet Army that measures considered necessary by the top leadership should be carried out by military leaders despite their possible statements and personal objections, and that unconditional military obedience should take place in the interests of ensuring and conducting operations, then this means for members of the organization, if not the final removal of responsibility from them, then at least a commutation of the sentence in relation to their actions, which were carried out on the basis of orders. An almost identical, or at least quite analogous, interpretation of the duty of soldierly obedience in both armies will have a decisive influence on the interpretation of the provisions of the regulations relating to the execution of orders. As for the organization itself, as such, because the actions of its members can and will in this case result in a commutation of the sentence of the Tribunal, it cannot be of a "criminal character".⁴⁹¹

490 Ibid. S. 451.

491 Op. Quoted from: Military Historical Journal. 1992. No. 9. S. 94.

It must be said that similar questions formulated by a highly professional lawyer were put to General B. Smith and Field Marshal Lord Allenbrook. It was almost impossible to answer them negatively.

Members of the International Military Tribunal, having considered applications Laterzer, April 27, 1946 made the following decision:

"... 3. Petition to send questionnaires to General Bedel Smith, Field Marshal Lord Allenbrook, Marshal Zhukov.

The Tribunal dismissed these motions as irrelevant."⁴⁹² However, the International Military Tribunal, having declared criminal the leadership of the National Socialist Party, the Gestapo, the SD, the SS, and the SA, did not recognize as such the government office of Nazi Germany, the General Staff and the High Command of the Wehrmacht.

... The orders depicted by the artist Korin on the chest of Marshal Zhukov only looked like armor. Merits on the Russian land are highly valued, but they do not protect from the vicissitudes of fate. And besides, if we consider that a Russian person is always a sinner ...

The need for invincible commanders disappeared for a while. In August 1945, the former head of the Smersh Main Directorate of Counterintelligence of the Group of Soviet Occupation Forces in Germany, General A.A. Vadis, informed his leadership: "There is talk about Serov (Deputy G.K. that he received the Hero of the Soviet Union undeservedly, this was done by Zhukov in order to bring Serov closer to himself ...

Many believe that Zhukov is the first candidate for the post of people's commissar of defense. Zhukov is rude and arrogant, sticks out his merits, there are posters on the roads "Glory to Marshal Zhukov". In one of the conversations with an army political worker, when he referred to Bulganin's directive on political bodies, Zhukov said: "What are you poking Bulganin to me, who am I to you?" ". Everything that can be hastily fell into one heap. After the Victory Parade at his dacha, Zhukov made the first toast not to Stalin, but to "the

oldest commander Chuikov." Singer Lidia Ruslanova at one of the receptions in Potsdam called Zhukov George the Victorious.

The shadow of a conspiracy against Stalin, allegedly planned by Georgy Konstantinovich with a group of officers, is already more serious. The "Zhukov case" included accusations that, without serious grounds, he dismissed top officials from their posts, approved "perverse" charters, appropriated the merit in many victories and downplayed the role of Stalin in them. In reports to Stalin, it was reported that some well-known generals - the commander of the 8th Guards Army V.I. Chuikov, the commander of the 1st Guards Tank Army M.E. Katukov, the commander of the artillery of the Group of Soviet Occupation Forces in Germany V.I. Kazakov and others - call themselves "Zhukovtsy", not "Stalinists".

In April 1946, Zhukov was recalled to Moscow and appointed Commander-in-Chief of the Ground Forces. After the post of first deputy, he becomes simply deputy people's commissar of defense, moreover

⁴⁹² Ibid. S. 94.

but subordinate to N.A. Bulganin, an amateur who did not have a military education. Naturally, with the domineering nature of Zhukov, friction immediately began to arise between them.

At a time when Zhukov was just accepting cases in his new position, the head of the Main Directorate of Counterintelligence "Smersh" V.S. Abakumov fabricated documents on the so-called "aviation case". It all started with a letter that Vasily Stalin sent to

his father in August 1945. The letter contained a complaint that "the Air Force is accepting from the industry the Yak-9 aircraft with defects, due to which many pilots are fighting." Then, by a decree of the GKO, the commander of the Air Force, Chief Marshal of Aviation A.A. Novikov, was reprimanded "for his inattentive attitude to the signals coming from the Air Force combat units about serious defects in the Yak-9 aircraft with the 107A engine and the lack of perseverance in the requirements to eliminate these defects."⁴⁹³ Novikov believed that the reason for this was his refusal to submit Vasily Stalin to the rank of general. Despite this, under pressure from Joseph Vissarionovich himself, in early March 1946, his son nevertheless became a general, and the obstinate Novikov was removed from his post. In mid-March, a state commission was created to inspect the Air Force, chaired by Deputy Minister of the Armed Forces Bulganin. The members of the commission, which included prominent military figures, including marshals Zhukov and Vasilevsky, found many shortcomings in the activities of A. A. Novikov as commander of the Air Force. By a decree of the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR dated March 16, 1946, Novikov was removed from his post, and in April, despite the fact that he was a deputy of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, he was arrested. On April 30, Novikov writes a lengthy letter to Stalin, in which he declares his guilt "in even more important crimes", the essence of which is ... his connection with Zhukov and those "politically harmful" conversations that were conducted with him. The description of the "harmful" acts of Georgy Konstantinovich takes several pages. "Regarding Zhukov, I first of all want to

say that he is an exceptionally power-hungry and narcissistic person, loves fame, honor and servility before him very much and cannot tolerate objections. Knowing Zhukov, I understood that he, not so much in the interests of the state, but more for his own purposes, seeks to visit the troops more often in order to gain even more authority for himself.

... Zhukov leads a harmful, isolated line, that is, he gathers people around him, brings them closer to him and pretends that he is a "good uncle" for them. Zhukov had such a person, and I, as well as Serov ... Zhukov very cunningly, subtly and in a cautious

manner, in a conversation with me, as well as among other persons, tried to belittle the leading role in the war of the Supreme High Command, and at the same time, Zhukov, not embarrassed, sticks out his role in the war as a commander and even declares that all the main plans for military operations were developed by him. Thus, in many conversations that have taken place over the past

⁴⁹³ Op. by: Joseph Stalin in the arms of the family. From a personal archive. M., 1993. S. 149.

for a year and a half, Zhukov told me that the operations to defeat the Germans near Leningrad, Stalingrad and on the Kursk Bulge were developed according to his idea and prepared by him, Zhukov. Zhukov told me the same about the defeat of the Germans near Moscow ... "

Nevertheless, Abakumov's investigators turned out to be bad editors - they missed one paragraph in Novikov's text, where he says about himself: "I repeat that despite the high position that I occupied and the authority created for me by the Supreme Commander, I still always felt downtrodden . This has been going on with me for a long time." Nevertheless, the statement of the "beaten" Novikov was read out at a meeting of the Supreme Military Council, which took

place on June 1, 1946, under the chairmanship of Stalin. It is not possible to accurately reconstruct the course of this meeting, since various sources, primarily the memories of the participants, interpret it with a great deal of subjectivity. Even the personal testimonies left by Georgy Konstantinovich are very contradictory. It is absolutely certain that Novikov's "testimony" was read out in full and that Marshal of the Armed Forces P.S. Rybalko took the firmest stand in Zhukov's defense. Let us pay tribute to the integrity and decency of Pavel Semenovich - he already had reasons to be offended by Zhukov, he heard something undeserved from Georgy Konstantinovich when he was commander of the 3rd Guards Tank Army, during the storming of Berlin. I.S. Konev, this is confirmed by other evidence, mentions that a lot of dirt on Zhukov's head, including all sorts of everyday details, was poured by the head of the Main Personnel Directorate, General F.I. Golikov. Konev himself at the meeting noted that Zhukov's character was quarrelsome, difficult, it was very difficult to work with him, not only being under his command, but also being a neighbor on the front. "He cited our disputes over the Berlin operation as an

example," Ivan Stepanovich recalled. - But, however, he said that I categorically reject the accusations against Zhukov of political dishonesty, of disrespect for the Central Committee. He said that I consider Zhukov a man devoted to the party, the government and Stalin personally, an honest communist ... If Zhukov was a dishonorable person, he would hardly have carried out the orders of the Stavka with such perseverance, risking his life, go to the most dangerous sectors of the front, crawl on belly along the front line, observing the actions of the troops in order to assess the situation on the spot and help the command in making certain decisions. A dishonest person, especially a politically dishonest one, will not act like this."494

Army General V.D. Sokolovsky, according to Konev, "built his speech in a more streamlined form, but fundamentally confirmed that Zhukov was an honest man, honestly carried out orders, and showed his role in protecting Moscow. True, Sokolovsky also noticed that working with Zhukov, due to his quarrelsome character, really

not easy".

Refuted most of the accusations against Zhukov Marshal

Soviet Union K.K. Rokossovsky, General of the Army A.V. Khrulev.

At the same time, members of the Politburo Malenkov, Molotov, Beria unanimously asserted that Zhukov was arrogant, he attributes to himself all the victories of the Soviet Armed Forces, that he is a politically immature, non-party person, and that the essence of Zhukov's character is not only that he is heavy and quarrelsome, but rather dangerous, because he has Bonapartist

manners.

"The accusations were heavy. Zhukov sat with his head hanging down, and was very worried: he turned pale, then blushed, says Konev. Finally, he was given the floor. Zhukov said that he completely rejected A.A. Novikov's statement that his character was not angelic, that's right, but he categorically disagrees with the accusations of dishonesty and non-partisanship, he is a communist who responsibly carried out everything entrusted to him by the party; that he really pleads guilty only to the fact that he exaggerated his role in organizing the victory over the enemy ... After the discussion and after the speech of G.K. Zhukov, Stalin, again

Looking around the room, he asked the question:

- What are we going to do with Zhukov? .. From
the hall from the side of several members of the Main Military Council of the post
followed offer take off Zhukov With
Commander-in-Chief of the Ground Forces. The opinion was unanimous. Zhukov must be relieved
of his post as Commander-in-Chief of the Ground Forces ...

Involuntarily, everyone sitting there had the feeling that almost repressive measures were being prepared against Zhukov. It seems that the speeches of the military, who all unanimously noted Zhukov's shortcomings, but at the same time defended him, showed his activities as front commander, as coordinator, played a role. After that, Stalin, apparently, had the idea that it was impossible to resolve the issue with Zhukov in this way - just to completely remove him, and even more so to repress him, this would be met with disapproval not only by the leading circles of the army, but also in the country, because the authority of G. K. Zhukova among the broad strata of the people and the army was indisputably high. Therefore, one of the members of the Politburo and Stalin himself suggested appointing him commander of the troops of a small military district. And they immediately called him "Odessa."⁴⁹⁵ The results of the meeting of the Supreme Military Council were summed up in the order

Minister of the Armed Forces I.V. Stalin No. 009 dated June 9, 1946: "Top secret to
Comrade Stalin We are
sending you a draft
corrected, according to your instructions
Order of the Minister of the Armed Forces of the USSR on Marshal Zhukov. Bulganin,
Vasilevsky. June 8, 1946. Top
secret ORDER of the
Minister of the Armed Forces
of the
USSR on June 9, 1946 No. 009 Moscow Council of
Ministers of the USSR by a resolution of
June 3 with. G.

⁴⁹⁵ Ibid. pp. 500-501.

(emphasized by Stalin. - V.D.) approved the proposal of the Supreme Military Council of June 1 on the release of Marshal of the Soviet Union Zhukov from the post of Commander-in-Chief of the Ground Forces and by the same decree released Marshal Zhukov from the duties of Deputy Minister of the Armed Forces.

The facts of the case are as follows. Former Commander of the Air Force Novikov recently sent a statement to the Government against Marshal Zhukov, in which he reported facts of unworthy and harmful behavior on the part of Marshal Zhukov in relation to the Government and the Supreme High Command. The Supreme Military Council at its meeting on June 1 this year. Mr.. considered Novikov's said statement and established that

Marshal Zhukov, despite the high position created for him by the Government and the Supreme High Command, considered himself offended, expressed dissatisfaction with the decisions of the Government and spoke hostilely about him among his subordinates.

Marshal Zhukov, having lost all modesty and being carried away by a sense of personal ambition, believed that his merits were not sufficiently appreciated, while attributing to himself, in conversations with his subordinates, the development and conduct of all the main operations of the Great Patriotic War, including those operations to which he had nothing to do .

Moreover, Marshal Zhukov, being embittered himself, tried to group dissatisfied, failed and dismissed bosses around him and took them under his protection, thereby opposing himself to the Government and the Supreme High Command.

Contrary to the stated statements of Marshal Zhukov (Stalin's insert. - V.D.), at a meeting of the Supreme Military Council, it was established that all plans for all, without exception, significant operations of the Patriotic War, as well as plans for their support, were discussed and adopted at joint meetings of the State Defense Committee and members of the Headquarters in the presence the respective front commanders and chief employees of the General Staff, and the chiefs of the military branches were often involved in the case. It was further established that he had nothing to do with the plan for the liquidation of the Stalingrad

group of German troops and the implementation of this plan, which Marshal Zhukov ascribes to himself: as is known, the plan for the liquidation of German troops was developed and the liquidation itself began in the winter of 1942, when Marshal Zhukov was on the Ukrainian (crossed out by Stalin. - V.D.) another (written by Stalin. - V.D.) front, far from Stalingrad. It was further established that Marshal Zhukov also had nothing to do with the liquidation of the Crimean group of German troops, as well as with the implementation of this plan.

It was further established that the liquidation of the Korsun-Shevchenkivskyi group of German troops was planned and carried out not by Marshal Zhukov, as he stated about it (Stalin's addition. - V.D.), but by Marshal Konev, and Kiev was not liberated by a blow from the south, from the Bukrinsky bridgehead, as suggested by Marshal Zhukov, but with a blow from the north ... It was finally established that, recognizing the merits of Marshal Zhukov in

the capture of Berlin, it cannot be ruled out (crossed out by Stalin. -

V.D.), to deny, as Marshal Zhukov does (written by Stalin. - V.D.), and that (crossed out by Stalin. - V.D.), that without an attack from the south by the troops of Marshal Konev and an attack from the north of the troops Marshal Rokossovsky Berlin would not have been surrounded and taken at the time in which it was

taken. The Supreme Military Council, having considered the issue of the behavior of Marshal Zhukov, unanimously recognized this behavior as harmful and incompatible with his position and, on this basis, decided to ask the Council of Ministers of the USSR to release Marshal Zhukov from the post of Commander-in-Chief of the Ground Forces.

... The Council of Ministers of the USSR on the basis of this (crossed out by Stalin. - V.D.) stated (added by Stalin. - V.D.) adopted the above decision to release Marshal Zhukov from his posts and appointed him Commander of the Odessa Military District. Minister of the Armed Forces of the USSR, Generalissimo of the Soviet Union I. Stalin."496

After being relieved of his post as Commander-in-Chief of the Ground Forces, Zhukov did not stay in Moscow. Already on June 13, 1946, he arrived in Odessa, where the headquarters of the military district was located. The marshal's special train was received not on the main track, but at the back of the station. "A lonely group of meeting generals, officers," A.N. Buchin recalled. - Confused, obviously not at ease. Georgy Konstantinovich did not even show that he had noticed their condition. He warmly, not according to the charter, greeted, a conversation began. In the meantime, we immediately unloaded the Mercedes and the Buick. Zhukov and the guards took their places, and two huge, by the scale of Odessa streets, black cars rolled to the headquarters of the district, where the new commander went first of all.

Zhukov did not have time to take up a new position, as a call to Moscow followed, to the Plenum of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks. Georgy Konstantinovich told the historian Svetlishin about this: "When I saw that Stalin was again dressed in a pre-war jacket, I understood: to be a "thunderstorm". And again I was not mistaken. After reviewing general political issues and the urgent problems of restoring the national economy, the Plenum began discussing the personal affairs of individual members of the Central Committee.

Seven people removed from the Central Committee left the meeting room one by one. And then I heard my name. No new facts proving my guilt were given. Therefore, when I was asked to speak, I declined the floor. I had nothing to justify. A vote was taken, and I was removed from the Central Committee. As soon as the hands of those who voted dropped, I got up from my seat and walked out of the hall with a marching step..."497

In the Odessa military district, everyone immediately felt the firm hand of the marshal. In units and formations, the intensity of combat training sharply increased. Here is what the officer for special assignments of the marshal writes about this

496 Op. Quoted from: Danilov V. Denunciation. Secret documents of the conspiracy against the Marshal Soviet Union Georgy Zhukov//Top secret. 1993. No. 2.

497 Op. Quoted from: Svetlishin N. Marshal Zhukov: Steep steps of fate // Soviet warrior. 1988. No. 8. S. 17.

S.P. Markov: "Georgy Konstantinovich went to the troops and exercises at any time of the year and in any weather. I remember how in February 1947 he went by train to staff exercises in Tiraspol. On the way, we were overtaken by a strong blizzard, the railway tracks were covered with snow. The movement was suspended.

It was possible to cancel or postpone the exercises for a day or two. But this was not in Zhukov's character. The question arose: how to proceed further to Tiraspol? And then, as in the fighting times of the Great Patriotic War, at the direction of the marshal, small An-2 aircraft were called. From a primitive small platform in a blizzard, they took to the air and soon landed near the city. Staff exercises began exactly on time, as planned. Zhukov traveled the entire territory of the district, most often he visited Nikolaev, Tiraspol, Chisinau, Balti, Bendery. The eternally sore point of our army - the living conditions of the officer corps - cannot be resolved without conflicts with the local leadership. The first

problem that Georgy Konstantinovich faced was that officers and members of their families often suffer from attacks by criminals. Officers received the right to carry personal weapons around the clock. At first, the effect was the opposite. They began to attack officers more often - now with the aim of seizing weapons. Then Zhukov gave them the right to use weapons in cases of danger of attack by criminals. At the direction of the marshal, Odessa was divided into sectors, in each of which a specially assigned military unit carried out special events: total checks of documents, raids on brothels, ambushes. All the detainees, among whom, of course, there were many law-abiding citizens who accidentally fell into roundups, were sent to the commandant's office for the night, and in the morning they were handed over to the police. As a result, the bandits became wary of attacking the military. The local authorities, however, regarded the actions of the district commander as arbitrariness, which was reported to Moscow. The main conflict between Zhukov and the Odessa Regional Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks occurred on the basis of the housing issue. Many officers of the district, renting housing, were forced to spend up to half of their salary on paying for it. The military departments of housing at that time almost did not build, and the Odessa authorities

believed that they were not obliged to provide the military with housing. The secretary of the regional committee A.I. Kirichenko was reported that the military in the city began to identify empty apartments and move into them, referring to the order of the commander of the district troops. Zhukov confirmed that he had given such an order, but refused to cancel it, pointing out that everything was being done according to the decision of the housing commission, which included deputies of the City Council. The commission also began to force the townspeople, who had surplus living space, to rent rooms to officers at fixed prices, much lower than those prevailing on the market. Zhukov's popularity among the troops increased sharply, but complaints rained down from residents in the regional and city committees. Kirichenko begged Moscow: "Get this dictator away from us!"

In Odessa, Georgy Konstantinovich also found time to relax, regularly visited theaters, watched all the new films. Passionate about hunting. Hunting rifles, according to Buchin, they always carried with them. They went hunting in the Buick of the guards, the car was called the "hunting" car.

Here Zhukov's novel with Lydia Zakharova continued,

whom he summoned to his district. Alexandra Dievna found out about this, but did not make a scandal: she returned to Moscow with her children. Later, after Zhukov was appointed commander of the troops of the Ural Military District, Zakharova went with him to Sverdlovsk. But here another woman captured the heart of Georgy Konstantinovich - a young graduate of the Kazan Medical Institute Galina Semenova ...

In the summer of 1947, a commission arrived from Moscow to check the Odessa Military District, headed by the newly appointed Minister of the Armed Forces and promoted to Marshal of the Soviet Union N.A. Bulganin. Zhukov did not come to meet the commission at the station, considering it humiliating for himself to be subordinate to the "political marshal". This incident increased Bulganin's dislike for Zhukov. The commission was unable to identify any significant shortcomings in the combat training of the troops of the district, but received a large number of complaints from officers about the facts of Zhukov's rough

treatment of his subordinates. In one regiment, seeing dirty washbasins, he put the commander out of the checkpoint and ordered not to let him into the regiment again. One of his deputies, a military general, was expelled from the meeting for being two minutes late. Independence assumed a demonstrative character. It is difficult to say whether this came from the naive exuberance of the Russian character, from an unconscious desire to always go ahead, against the current, or was a manifestation of a kind of protest against the humiliation experienced at a meeting of the Supreme Military Council. In the meantime, the competent authorities continued the investigation

begun in August 1946. Even the ~~Georgy~~ ^{Georgy} ~~Konstantinovich~~ ^{Konstantinovich} received a memorandum from Bulganin: "In the Yagodinsk customs (near the city of Kovel), 7 wagons were detained, in which there were 85 boxes of furniture. When checking the documentation, it turned out that the furniture belongs to Marshal Zhukov. It has been established that i. O. The head of the Logistics of the Group of Soviet Occupation Forces in Germany for the transport of furniture was issued the following certificate: "Issued to the Marshal of the Soviet Union comrade. Zhukov G.K. in that the

furniture named below, which he personally ordered from the Albin May furniture factory in Germany, was purchased at his own expense and the Military Council of the SOV Group in Germany allowed export to the Soviet Union. The specified

furniture was sent to the Odessa Military District with the accompanying captain comrade. Yagelsky. Transport No. 152/8431". On August 19, wagons with furniture

were sent from Yagodino to Odessa. Odessa customs was instructed not to issue this furniture until

receive special instructions.

An inventory of the furniture found in the inspected carriages is attached."⁴⁹⁸ Further, more. Abakumov presents to Stalin a voluminous document on a covert search of Zhukov's apartment and his dacha outside Moscow. A large number of valuables illegally acquired and taken out of Germany were found. Zhukov's vague explanations follow as to what and where it came from.

⁴⁹⁸ Op. Quoted from: Krasnov V. G. Unknown Zhukov. S. 463.

A long and humiliating clarification of who, why and for whom he took, where he kept it, where he took it. Everything is unconvincing. The volumes of the revealed gold items, sets, tapestries, works of art exceeded the sizes within which at least some intelligible justifications could be given.

The act on the transfer to the Administration of the Council of Ministers of the trophy property located at Zhukov, drawn up on February 3, 1948, leaves no doubt: Georgy Konstantinovich could not resist the opportunity to improve his personal material well-being.

The proud Stalinist slogan was minted on the medals: "Our cause is just - we won!" But many then perceived its meaning differently and acted on a completely different principle: "We won." Zhukov is no exception. The Suvorov rule of the Russian army turned out to be half-forgotten: only those trophies that are taken on the battlefield are honorable. And that thrashing that Suvorov inflicted on his officers in 1789 during the division of military trophies with the Austrians after a victorious battle with the Turkish troops: "Do we, Russians, need to waste time!" The "Zhukov case" was replenished with the testimony of those arrested: the former adjutant of Georgy Konstantinovich, Lieutenant Colonel A.S.

During interrogation, Sidnev admitted that he "attacked on easy prey and, forgetting about the interests of the state, which ... had to be protected, began to enrich himself. Ashamed as it is now to talk about it, but I have no choice but to admit that I was engaged in theft in Germany and appropriation of what was supposed to become the property of the state.

Further, the arrested man said that General Serov, who was close to Zhukov, was standing over him. "Serov saw very well all the shortcomings in Zhukov's work and behavior, but because of the established close relationship, he covered everything. When I was in Serov's office, I saw on his desk a portrait of Zhukov with an inscription on the back: "To the best fighting friend and comrade in memory." Another portrait of Zhukov hung on the wall in the same Serov's office. Serov and Zhukov often visited each other, went hunting and rendered mutual services.

In turn, General I.A. Serov, feeling that the ground was burning under his feet, sent an explanatory note to I.V. Stalin on February 8, 1948, in which he accused the Ministry of State Security, headed by V.S. Abakumov, of it seeks to settle personal scores with him.⁴⁹⁹

"Now, in order to denigrate me," Serov wrote, "Abakumov is trying with all his might to drag me to Zhukov. I am not afraid of these efforts, because besides Abakumov there is a Central Committee that can objectively sort things out. However, Abakumov is silent about himself, as he praised Zhukov and fawned over him like a boy. I will cite the facts, Comrade Stalin. When the Germans approached Leningrad and a difficult situation arose there, after all, none other than the all-knowing Abakumov spread rumors that "Zhdanov was confused in Leningrad, he was afraid to stay there, that Voroshilov was unable to organize defense, but Zhukov arrived and that's it."

499 Ibid. pp. 491-497.

turned the case, now Leningrad will not be surrendered.

In denigrating Zhukov, Serov obviously overdid it in proving the close friendship between the Minister of State Security and Georgy Konstantinovich. After all, it was Abakumov's department, at the direction of I.V. Stalin, who continued to actively inflate the "Zhukov case." The Hero of the Soviet Union, Lieutenant General V.V. Kryukov, was arrested. Already much later, in April 1953, Kryukov described how, in the literal sense of the word, he was knocked out of him to testify about his connections with Zhukov. "Protocols were also drawn up that I praised Zhukov everywhere and, and, finally, that I covered up Zhukov's crimes, but I still don't know what crimes. At first, I categorically refused to sign these protocols. Various repressions rained down again, and I must say frankly, I was faint-hearted. I had a very difficult condition.

Beaten, hungry, humiliated, sleepless nights also made themselves felt. I broke down and signed. To this day, I can't forgive myself. But I have a glimmer of hope that the time will come and I will be able to tell the truth, why I signed. 500 Kryukov sent a copy of his letter to the

Central Committee of the CPSU to Zhukov, and Georgy Konstantinovich forwarded it to Khrushchev with a note: "I have known Kryukov V.V. since 1931 as one of the most conscientious commanders, brave in battles against the Nazi invaders. I ask you, Nikita Sergeevich, to give instructions on Kryukov's request."⁵⁰¹ Soon VV Kryukov was released and returned to Moscow. His wife returned with him, the famous singer Lidia Ruslanova, who was arrested in September 1948 and convicted on the standard charge of "anti-Soviet propaganda."

After the trial of his adjutant Semochkin, Zhukov suffered a heart attack and was treated in the Kremlin hospital for a month. On February 12, 1948, he left for Sverdlovsk to take up the post of commander of the Urals Military District.

The Ural met with severe frosts - below 30 degrees. Georgy Konstantinovich, according to eyewitnesses, was in a good mood, joking. At least outwardly, it was not noticeable that he was depressed or offended by something. The meeting with Zhukov was remembered

by the writer V.V. Karpov, who was sent in 1950 to the Ural Military District by the General Staff. In the reception room of the commander, Karpov (at that time a lieutenant colonel. - V.D.) asked the adjutant to report to Zhukov that he, as a representative of the General Staff, would like to report on the results of the inspection of the district's intelligence units. Together with him was a representative of the Department of Fuels and Lubricants, also sent from Moscow. "We entered the office," Karpov recalled. Zhukov was sitting at his desk, reading papers. He has gained weight in recent years, but even sitting, he was majestically monumental. He briefly glanced at us, did not leave the table, did not say hello, nodded to the chairs at the table attached to his desk:

- Please ... I'm listening.

500 Ibid. S. 502.

501 Op. Cited from: Sulyanov A.K. Marshal Zhukov. Glory, oblivion, immortality. S. 315.

We introduced ourselves. The colonel began to quickly report on the state of fuel depots, filling stations, and, as it seemed to me, wanting to show off his knowledge of the subtleties in his business to the marshal, he spoke about trifles, not at the level of a commander:

"You see, Comrade Marshal of the Soviet Union, many gas stations are leaking fuel. And even here, at the district gas station, Comrade Marshal of the Soviet Union (he completely repeated the title of Zhukov several times, and I noticed how Georgy Konstantinovich's cheek twitched), I sat down, I looked, and from under the car - drip-drip, flowing petrol. So after all, it's not far from the state of emergency, Comrade Marshal of the Soviet Union. It may flare up, some slob with a cigarette butt or someone will clank with metal, a spark may turn out ... - What is your last name, you said? - very quietly and obviously trying to be

Zhukov asked calmly.

- Pilipenko ... Colonel Pilipenko, Comrade Marshal of the Soviet Union. (I don't remember the exact name of the colonel, but it was like this.)

Zhukov picked up the telephone of the military unit and dialed a number (apparently, the head of the department in which the colonel

worked). - Alexey Nikolaevich, hello, Zhukov says. Colonel Pilipenko works for you? Yes? So I ask you not to send such fools to me anymore ... Yes, yes, I will send it. Be healthy. (And to the colonel: "Go and leave. "). The colonel turned pale and walked out, for some reason on tiptoe, trying to step silently.⁵⁰² After such an ending, according to Karpov, his heart "jumped excitedly."

However, his conversation with the marshal proceeded in a completely calm tone. Zhukov asked why Karpov received the title of Hero of the Soviet Union and where he served. Karpov answered and reported the results of his check. "Zhukov listened attentively," Vladimir Vasilievich later noted. - When I finished and got up, the marshal also got up, left the table, extended his large, but already soft hand to me and said:

"Be healthy, scout," and he smiled very well, kindly...

In a short conversation in a few minutes, it seems to me, the features of his character were very clearly manifested: both rudeness, and directness, and intolerance to chatter, and a serious attitude to business, and respect for a military officer, and, finally, the kindest smile, testifying to

his humanity."

Stalin's attitude towards Zhukov gradually softened. In March 1950, Georgy Konstantinovich was allowed to run for elections to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR. He tried everywhere to demonstrate that he was satisfied with his position. In July 1950, Abakumov reported to Stalin: in a conversation with artists of the Bolshoi Theater who were touring in Sverdlovsk, Zhukov said that he was "good everywhere", and was glad that they voted for him so well in the elections to the Supreme Soviet. There were quite a few exiles and former prisoners in Sverdlovsk, and this contingent, the marshal believed, voted for him especially actively: "That's where my friends are!" And he added with caution: "No matter how they introduce me to them." Georgy Konstantinovich loved to visit theaters and concerts,

⁵⁰² Op. Quoted from: Karpov V. Secret massacre of Marshal Zhukov // Pravda. 1991. August 19.

communicate with artists. At one of the graduation parties at the Sverdlovsk special school of the Air Force, he drew attention to the performance of cadet Shtokolov, who perfectly performed "Sad Willows" by M. Blanter and "Oh, roads" by O. Novikov. Zhukov thanked the graduate for singing and said: "There are many people like you in aviation, but you need to sing." These words turned out to be prophetic. According to the distribution, Shtokolov ended up in the Serpukhov Air Force School, but soon Zhukov's order came there: "Cadet Shtokolova B.T. send to the day department of the conservatory. Thus began the creative path of the future people's artist. Their daughter Maria, who was born in June 1957, recalls the acquaintance that took place in Sverdlovsk

and Zhukov's relationship with G.A. Semenova, who was thirty years younger than him: "Father wrote in his diary that at the first meeting he did not pay attention to no attention to my mother (he was sick, and his mother treated him at home). When he got better, he became interested in her life, family, hobbies. He liked her modesty, but especially, as he himself admitted, her beautiful, warm, green eyes. There was always some kind of unique sadness lurking in them ...

Mom was pretty, everything was harmonious in her: a rich inner world, extraordinary kindness, a beautiful face, a slender figure, an easy gait, a special manner of speaking. Father then looked youthful, his face was fresh, lively, his eyes sparkling, stately. At first, my mother was embarrassed by his attention. She avoided meetings as best she could, but her father was persistent. Galina became his strongest love in life, although late. Georgy Konstantinovich wrote to Galina Alexandrovna from Gurzuf in

September 1952: "I am still under the spell of the last meeting with you, my Galyusenka! .. My dear, what a pity that you are not here. I miss you, I miss you ... May my love keep you, my dream of you ... "In March 1952, Stalin's new indulgence follows: Georgy Konstantinovich is elected a candidate member of the Central Committee of the CPSU. At the end of February

1953, Stalin summoned Zhukov to Moscow. There were rumors that Iosif Vissarionovich was going to make Zhukov either a minister, or the first deputy minister of defense, but he did not have time. What Stalin's real intention was, we will probably never know. With a high degree of probability, we can assume that he needed Zhukov these days. Because he was reliable. The reliability of

Zhukov is the reliability of a soldier. A real soldier is always in demand. Not in vain, not because of a lack of a sense of humor, Stalin told Eisenhower that Zhukov would never be left without a job in the Soviet Union.

Stalin left. It turned out that Zhukov was also needed by others.

Chapter XIV. land and power

About how on June 26, 1953 "they took Beria", there is a lot of evidence. Like all memoirs, they contain certain contradictions. And without exception, all the memories dedicated to this event are full of dramatic details. We will not

to go into disputes about who played the main role in the implementation of N.S. Khrushchev's intention: the arrest of Beria is not the capture of Berlin. After Stalin's death, his situation seems akin to the fate of a cut mushroom with a blackened leg. Lavrenty Pavlovich, probably, himself understood this very well when he saw the muzzles of pistols pointed at him during a meeting of the Presidium of the Central Committee of the CPSU. The investigation into

the case of Beria was conducted for six months, and the trial of him and his accomplices took place from December 18 to 23. The case was considered by the Special Judicial Presence of the Supreme Court of the USSR, chaired by Marshal of the Soviet Union I.S. Konev, which sentenced L.P. Beria to be shot. On the day the verdict was announced, General P.F. Batitsky carried it out.

The military conspiracy began to mature much earlier. Stalin was still alive when on March 5, 1953, at 8 pm, a joint meeting of the Plenum of the Central Committee of the CPSU, the Council of Ministers of the USSR and the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR opened in the Kremlin. Zhukov also took part in the meeting as a candidate member of the Central Committee of the CPSU. G. M. Malenkov said: "Everyone understands the enormous responsibility for the leadership of the country, which now falls on us. Everyone understands that the country cannot tolerate even a single hour of interruption in leadership." Stalin's "companions" sought to divide leadership positions among themselves as quickly as possible. It was decided to appoint Malenkov as Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR, Voroshilov as Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, Bulganin as Minister of War, and Vasilevsky and Zhukov as his first deputies.⁵⁰³

On March 15, 1953, Zhukov was again appointed commander-in-chief of the Ground Forces. The reliability of Georgy Konstantinovich was not in doubt among the new leadership of the country. The arrest of Beria,

carried out with the participation of Zhukov, further strengthened Khrushchev's confidence in him. Later, Admiral of the Fleet of the Soviet Union N.G. Kuznetsov wrote: "Although Zhukov was formally Deputy Minister of Defense, but, relying on friendship with Khrushchev, he behaved quite independently. Both of them, Khrushchev and Zhukov, openly scolded Stalin and invented all sorts of fables. But it remains on their conscience. In Zhukov's book (meaning "Memories and Reflections". - V.D.) I have already read something else. Our relations with G.K. Zhukov became truly dramatic when in February 1955 he was appointed Minister of Defense and received "carte blanche" from N.S. Khrushchev. All the accumulated hostility towards Stalin, like a straightened spring, was felt these days in all the behavior of Zhukov. It was as if he was striving to make up for lost time and glory."⁵⁰⁴ In turn, N.S. Khrushchev recalled: "I treated Marshal Zhukov with great respect and in a friendly way then (in the mid-1950s —V.D.). . We were brought closer

by the war. Besides, I never had any encounters with him. When Stalin disgraced him after the war, I sympathized with Zhukov. He made a strong impression on me with his mind, military knowledge and strong character.

⁵⁰³ See: Toptygin A. V. Unknown Beria. St. Petersburg; Moscow, 2002, pp. 446–451.

⁵⁰⁴ Kuznetsov N. G. Our relations with Zhukov have become truly dramatic ...//Military History Journal. 1992. No. 1. S. 79.

On November 7, 1953, Zhukov was invited to a diplomatic reception on the occasion of the anniversary of the October Revolution. During the banquet, US Ambassador to Moscow Charles Bohlen, after another toast to peace, offered to drink not only for peace, but also for justice, because without justice in international affairs there will never be lasting peace. "The reference to justice irritated Soviet officials," Bohlen recalled, "especially Kaganovich, who responded with a long speech. Its essence boiled down to the fact that in the world there are different concepts of justice, while peace is something that all peoples understand in the same way. Then Zhukov got up, taking the place of Bulganin, who had managed to get drunk dead drunk. To my surprise, he said that he would like to support the toast to the peace proposed by the American ambassador ... The only thing that can be said with certainty is that Zhukov demonstrated his independence from the Kremlin politicians.

Bohlen was probably right, although Zhukov was aware of the exact opposite: his unconditional dependence on the intrigues of power circles. Intrigues that do not inherently go beyond the kitchen family scenes. But the line between him, flesh and blood representing the deep layers of the people - the "earth", as they said before - and those in power was obvious. With them, Zhukov was not on the way.

He moved away from them, tried to arrange his personal affairs. Too confusing. He got G.A. Semenova and her mother an apartment on Gorky Street, helped Galina get a job at the Burdenko hospital. And at the same time, he finally registered his marriage with Alexandra Dievna. Someone loved, someone endured humiliation and suffered. The constant clarification of family relations between women, accompanied by appeals to the Central Committee, bothered even N.S. Khrushchev, who sharply condemned the joint trip of Zhukov and Semenova to Bulgaria. In his notebook, Georgy Konstantinovich noted: "Upon arrival in Moscow, Bulganin called me and said that Nikita spoke disapprovingly at the Presidium

of the Central Committee that I was vacationing in Varna with Galina. This infuriated me, and in a fever I expressed a number of harsh words to Nikita, which Bulganin immediately tried to convey to Khrushchev, with whom I soon had a conciliatory conversation on this subject. Nikita said: "I don't mind Galina, but I recommend you take your time." Then I didn't understand that with his "benevolence" he wants to have in my person a true friend who will support him in the struggle.

for power."

In the meantime, nuclear weapons began to be supplied to the Armed Forces. The decision to test in practice how the troops will act in the conditions of its use was taken at the government level. The initiator of military exercises with a real nuclear explosion was the Ministry of the Armed Forces of the USSR. All preparatory measures were coordinated with the Ministries of Atomic Energy (at that time - the First Main Directorate under the Council of Ministers of the USSR), Health, Chemical and Radio Engineering Industry. The development of specific proposals for the preparation of exercises, which was led by Marshal of Artillery N.D. Yakovlev, Deputy Minister of Defense for Armaments, was entrusted to the special department of the General Staff of the USSR Armed Forces. On September 29, 1953, the Council of Ministers of the USSR issued a resolution that laid the foundation for the preparation of the Armed Forces and the entire

countries to act "under special conditions". On the proposal of the head of the special department of the General Staff, V.A. Bolyatko, Bulganin approved the list of guidelines for publication. This list, in particular, included a handbook on nuclear weapons and manuals for officers: "Combat properties of nuclear weapons", "Manual on conducting operations and combat operations in the conditions of the use of nuclear weapons", "Manual on anti-nuclear defense", "Guide on the protection cities", "Guidelines for medical support", "Guidelines for radiation reconnaissance", "Guidelines for decontamination and sanitization", as well as "Memo to a soldier, sailor and population on protection against atomic weapons". Under the personal control of Bulganin, all these documents were published by the Military Publishing House within a month and delivered to their destination. A screening of special films on nuclear weapons testing was organized for the leadership of the army and navy. At the same time, searches were made for a test site where a combined arms exercise with a real nuclear explosion could be held. The considered option of holding such an exercise

at the Kapustin Yar missile range was rejected as not meeting security issues. In the spring of 1954, a reconnaissance group led by Lieutenant-General I.S. Glebov gave a positive assessment of the Totsk test site, located between Samara and Orenburg.

An identical atomic bomb with a capacity of 40,000 tons of TNT was previously tested at the Semipalatinsk test site. Now, conducting an air nuclear explosion in conditions of rough and wooded terrain should have helped to assess the influence of the earth's relief on the weakening or strengthening of its damaging factors: shock wave, light radiation, penetrating radiation and radioactive contamination of the area. Marshal of the Soviet Union G.K. Zhukov was appointed head of the exercises. The leaders of the Ministry of Medium Machine

Building of the USSR headed by V.A. Malyshev, as well as leading scientists, among whom were the creators of nuclear weapons I.V. Kurchatov and K.I. Shchelkin, took part in their preparation and implementation. There were commanders of all branches of the armed forces, defense ministers of friendly countries. It should be noted that the Totsk combined-arms exercise with a real nuclear explosion carried out on September 14, 1954 at 09:33 Moscow time in the zone of troops active in the

exercise was and remains the only one in the history of the Soviet Armed Forces. For comparison, we point out that in the United States in 1951-1956, eight similar exercises were held. It is difficult to say whether under the influence of personal impressions or under the influence of official propaganda, Zhukov recalled: "When I saw the atomic explosion, examined the area and equipment after the explosion, watched several times a film that captured

to the smallest detail everything that happened as a result of the explosion of the atomic bomb, I came to the conclusion that a war with the use of atomic weapons should not be waged under any circumstances ... But something else was clear to me: the arms race imposed on us demanded that we take all measures to urgently eliminate the backlog of our Armed Forces in equipping nuclear weapons. Under conditions of constant atomic blackmail, our country could not feel safe."

Since this action in the era of glasnost became the subject of all kinds of speculation, we will use the memories of the Totsk teachings of General of the Army M.A. Gareev. According to his authoritative testimony, an atomic bomb with a capacity of 20 kilotons was dropped from an aircraft and exploded at an altitude of 350 meters. Before the explosion, the troops were located in shelters no closer than 5-7 kilometers, and the leadership of the USSR Ministry of Defense, the defense ministers of a number of allied countries, and the commanders of the district troops were located openly for observation, having only goggles, 11 kilometers from the epicenter of the explosion. The advanced units of the advancing troops advanced to the explosion area after 2.5 hours. The attacking units in protective equipment passed 500–600 meters from the epicenter, receiving a radiation dose of 0.02–0.03 roentgens, and in tanks - several times less. "But later, more severe consequences of radiation exposure and radioactive contamination of the area were revealed," Gareev writes, "from which the local population suffered."

Gareev denies ridiculous fabrications about the number of dead and injured. For example, I. Bunich in the book "Operation Thunderstorm" cites the following "information": "Out of 40 thousand military personnel thrown into the training ground, 30 thousand quickly died from burns and radiation. 10 thousand became disabled". V.V. Karpov, who during the war years obtained information from "languages", but by no means from the yellow press, wrote: "Thirty-year-old, recently powerful men turned into decrepit ruins. Probably, all the participants in these exercises have already died out ... This is probably the darkest day in the life and service of Marshal Zhukov, as the head of the exercise ... "

Gareev's point of view: "Yes, this doctrine had more serious consequences than it was originally supposed. Unfortunately, there were also those who were seriously injured and died, and this bitter truth must be told, including about Zhukov, but not to invent something that did not exist. But in this case, both the government and the Department of Defense relied on physicists who should have been better able to foresee the consequences of an atomic weapon test." Just in case, we recall once again: all high-ranking officials, led

by Zhukov, were without protective equipment 11 kilometers from the epicenter of the explosion. Relations between Georgy Konstantinovich and the Navy, with its popularly recognized

commander, Admiral N.G. It is probably not destined for a natural peasant to understand the psychology of a sailor. It's a pity. Moreover, only Nikolai Gerasimovich, together with his commander of the Black Sea Fleet F.S. Oktyabrsky, was one of the few who found themselves in June 1941 in full readiness to repulse the perfidious aggressor. The name of Kuznetsov is associated with the heroic defense of Odessa, Sevastopol, the immortal exploits of amphibious assault forces, "black jackets" ... After the appointment of Zhukov in February 1955 to the post of minister

defense, Kuznetsov felt his situation hopeless. He recalled:

"I suffered a heart attack. The doctors prescribed a limited duration of work. Having thought over and taken into account the relations with Zhukov that were still not sticking (without a gap), I myself applied (May 26, 1955. - V.D.) with a request to "release me" from the post of Deputy Minister of Defense and use it at a smaller job. It was regarded as mine

unwillingness to work with Zhukov. There is some grain of truth in this. Guided by non-personal motives, I considered our cooperation undesirable and harmful to the cause, after Marshal [Zhukov] told me bluntly that he would not leave "without consequences" my doubts about his appointment to a high post. But the main thing was not that. By that time, my personal position was no longer so interesting to me. I never suffered from excessive ambition, and having spent quite a long time at the post of People's Commissar and Minister of the Navy, I was ready to be satisfied with a more modest area of work. More importantly, my hostile relationship with the Secretary of Defense inevitably had an effect on business.

I did not receive an answer, and I was allowed to choose a deputy who could fully fulfill the duties of the minister in my absence. I gave the name of S.G. Gorshkov, the then commander of the Black Sea Fleet. We agreed to the proposal."

On October 29, 1955, an accident occurred in the Black Sea Fleet with the battleship Novorossiysk. The tragic death of the ship, the reasons for which are still being debated, was blamed on the Commander-in-Chief of the Navy. Less than a month after the death of Novorossiysk, Zhukov submitted a report to Khrushchev, which, in particular, said: "The leadership of the Navy is in an unsatisfactory state, Commander-in-Chief of the Navy Admiral of the Fleet of the Soviet Union Kuznetsov N.G. unsatisfactorily led the fleet, incorrectly assessed the role of the fleet in a future war. He made mistakes in the views and direction of the construction and development of the fleet and missed the training of leading personnel ... "Kuznetsov was ordered to appear before the Minister of Defense. "In a rude, characteristic form, he announced,"

recalled Nikolai Gerasimovich, "that I had been removed from my post, demoted to the rank of vice admiral. To my question, on the basis of what and why this was done without my call, he, grinning, replied that this, they say, was not necessary at all.

"In the navy, the minister was more afraid than respected," wrote the correspondent of Krasnaya Zvezda, Captain 1st Rank S. Bystrov. - Zhukov's last inspection trips to the Northern Fleet and the Baltic left painful memories of his ruthlessness, even cruelty, in an effort to restore order. Zhukov personally demoted and retired 273 officers."⁵⁰⁵ About the anti-Stalinist campaign, in which Zhukov played one of the leading roles, Georgy Konstantinovich

spoke with restraint in his "Memoirs and Reflections": "Of course, Stalin made mistakes, of course, but their reasons cannot be considered in isolation from objective historical processes and phenomena.

But at that time, Georgy Konstantinovich was still not in his midst. Submitted for approval to Nikita Sergeevich a draft report at the Plenum of the Central Committee of the CPSU condemning Stalin's personality cult, asked Khrushchev to "look through and give his comments."

Whether or not Zhukov had assistants in the texts, but in each line one can see the opportunistic nature of historical assessments. Let us omit the ideological and political substantiation of views, inevitable in such "documents". Essentially, the following was said:

⁵⁰⁵ Bystrov S. In October 1957. The last days before the resignation of G.K. Zhukov // A red star. 1989. May 19.

"From the first minutes of the outbreak of the war, in the Supreme leadership of the country, in the person of Stalin, there was a complete confusion in managing the country's defense, using which the enemy firmly seized the initiative in his own hands and dictated his will in all strategic directions." Zhukov criticized the allegations that Stalin, having

unraveled the plans of the German command, decided to wear out and bleed the enemy with active defense, buy time to concentrate reserves, and then, going on the counteroffensive, deliver a crushing blow and defeat the enemy. In reality, there was no such decision, and the "active defense theory" was needed to hide the true reasons for our failures in the initial period of the war (how then should Zhukov's strategy of "exhaust and then beat", expressed by him not without pride in a letter to Zhdanov in November 41st?). The absence of a full-fledged High Command was the main reason for the failures and defeats in the war. "There was Stalin, without whom, according to the then existing order, no one could make an independent

decision, and I must say truthfully, at the beginning of the war, Stalin was very poorly versed in operational-tactical issues. The Headquarters of the Supreme High Command was created belatedly and was not prepared to practically take over and exercise qualified control over the Armed Forces. The General Staff, the People's Commissariat of Defense from the very beginning were disorganized by Stalin and deprived of his confidence ... "

Rightly, of course, Zhukov paid great attention to the fate of former prisoners of war who returned to their homeland from fascist captivity. He noted that Soviet soldiers who were taken prisoner, as a rule, remained faithful to their homeland, behaved courageously, steadfastly endured the hardships of captivity, bullying by the Nazis, and often showed genuine heroism. Many Soviet soldiers fled the Nazi camps at the risk of their lives and continued to fight the enemy in his rear, in partisan detachments, or made their way across the front line to their troops. "However, both during the war and in the post-war period, the grossest perversions of Soviet legality were committed against former prisoners of war, contrary to Leninist principles and the very nature of the Soviet system. These perversions went along the line of creating an atmosphere of mistrust and suspicion towards them, as well as unfounded accusations of grave crimes and the massive use of repression.

When deciding on the fate of former prisoners of war, neither the circumstances of captivity and behavior in the rear, nor the fact of escaping from captivity, participation in partisan struggle, and so on, were taken into account. Our officers, who were taken prisoner wounded, courageously held captive, were indiscriminately deprived of their officer rank and without trial were sent to penal battalions on a par with persons who had committed crimes.

Some Soviet and party organs still continue to show an incorrect attitude towards former prisoners of war who have not stained themselves in any way, treat them with distrust, establish illegal restrictions on promotion, employment in responsible work, election as deputies to the Soviets of Working People's Deputies, admission to higher educational institutions and others, infringing on their rights and the dignity of Soviet citizens.

The most gross perversions of the violation of the legal rights of prisoners of war were associated with their unreasonable criminal prosecution. A significant number of prisoners of war who returned to their homeland were subjected to various punishments, ranging from exile to a special settlement to capital punishment. Marshal of the Armored Forces O.A. Losik noted in this regard: "In the position of Minister of Defense, Zhukov committed another major political and, it would be fair to say, moral deed. We are talking about returning an honest name to millions of Soviet people who went through Dante's hell of captivity. Zhukov, like anyone who participated in the war, especially in its first period, was well aware that the vast majority of the almost 5 million soldiers and officers were captured not at all because of cowardice or betrayal, but became victims of mediocre command, confusion, which sometimes reigned at the front, the lack of weapons and ammunition, or for other reasons beyond their control. Marshal Zhukov was one of the first in our country to raise the issue of a radical change in attitude towards former prisoners of war. He repeatedly appealed to the highest party and state bodies with persistent proposals to eliminate gross violations of the law against persons who were in captivity, spoke out against the groundless accusation of treason against them and unjustified repressions against them, demanded that the

moral yoke of distrust be removed from former prisoners of war, rehabilitate those illegally convicted, eliminate restrictions on the civil rights of former prisoners of war. His perseverance paid off: in 1957, a decree was signed by the Presidium of the Supreme Council, which eliminated many undeserved restrictions for former prisoners of war. The unexpected resignation prevented the marshal from completing this work, and the former prisoners of war were restored to all their rights only in the 90s." 506 All this is true, if you forget that Zhukov's signature was under the order of the Stavka V GK dated August 16, 1941 270 "On cases of cowardice and surrender and measures to suppress such actions." It was this order that predetermined the attitude towards prisoners of war both during the war years and

after its completion.

A touch is appropriate for Zhukov's portrait of the US Ambassador to Russia Ch. to Eisenhower. Zhukov was a Bolshevik, steadfastly following the party line, but first and foremost he was a Russian patriot. He believed in the independence of the army, and one of the reasons for his eventual downfall was the attempt to abolish the system of political commissars. His characteristic purity of thought contrasted sharply with the insincerity of other Bolshevik leaders. He showed tolerance and even respect for the United States, and I had no doubt that his affection for General Eisenhower was sincere and not caused by passing circumstances.

Eisenhower himself did not hide his sincere disappointment:

506 Op. Quoted from: Cavaliers of the Order of Zhukov about the great commander. M., 1998. S. 25–26.

"As soon as we raised serious issues, it became quite obvious that Zhukov was not the same as he was in the 45th year. During our meetings then, he was an independent, self-confident person who undoubtedly accepted communist doctrine, but was always ready to meet with joy to discuss any current problem and together seek its reasonable solution. He did this on his own initiative and once even sharply put his political adviser Andrei Vyshinsky in his place, ordering him to leave the room so that we could have a confidential conversation together. By many indications, it was obvious at the time that Zhukov was exactly what he wanted to appear - a highly important person in the Soviet government, perhaps second only to Stalin himself. During my visit to Moscow in 1945, this assessment of his position and influence was repeatedly confirmed. Now in Geneva, ten years later, he looked dismayed and clearly subservient in his position. He monotonously repeated to me the arguments of the head of the Soviet delegation ... He was lifeless, did not joke and did not smile, as before. My old friend was following orders from his superiors. From this personal conversation, I have nothing left but a feeling of bitterness.

The old warrior Eisenhower was able to change his military uniform for a tuxedo, Zhukov did not become a diplomat.

He was not a diplomat, and when he crossed the historical line in 1956, organizing the suppression of the uprising in Hungary. Before the start of the military operation, Georgy Konstantinovich unsuccessfully tried to create an idea, primarily from the American side, that the Soviet troops would not go to Budapest. He cited Poland as an example, where popular unrest did not involve military intervention, although Rokossovsky suggested moving a tank corps against the demonstrators. But it was already obvious to everyone: in Hungary, where the rebels took power in many cities and had a strong influence in the government of Imre Nagy, Khrushchev would decide to use force. On November 4, an alternative Hungarian government was formed in Transcarpathia, headed by Janos Kadar, and at his "request", Soviet troops under the command of Marshal Konev moved to Budapest. Within a week, the organized armed resistance of the rebels was suppressed. After the completion of the Hungarian campaign, Zhukov was awarded the title of Hero of the Soviet Union for the fourth time. In the Decree of the Presidium of the Supreme

Soviet of the USSR, the 60th anniversary of the marshal was announced as the official reason for the award. Summing up the results of the operation at a meeting of the highest command staff in December 1956, Georgy Konstantinovich noted: "In less than a month and a half, 144

cases of emergencies and gross violations of discipline took place in formations and units located in Hungary, with more than half of them related to such serious crimes as murder, rape, robberies and beatings of the local population, as well as robberies of warehouses and shops. It is characteristic that some officers, including senior ones, instead of establishing the strictest order, themselves took part in all these outrages. The 114th Airborne Regiment, led by the regiment commander, behaved especially unworthily. The facts of the immoral behavior of Soviet military personnel in Hungary were so intolerable that they were forced to deal with the Central Committee of the Party, which

made a decision on this matter. All those guilty of looting, robbery, violence and other crimes have been brought to justice, including the commander of the 114th paratrooper regiment. We must conclude that with the education of personnel, things are not going well with us. Then Zhukov outlined his vision of the Soviet military doctrine: "We will be provided with tanks by 90 percent in 1960. I am a

supporter of heavy tanks. It must be borne in mind that the main theater of military operations is Europe. Here the fate of the world will be decided. And we must come out in such an organization in order to defeat the enemy for sure ... We need to quickly create the S-75 mobile missile system. This system can play its role even in the absence of fighter aircraft under certain conditions ... By 1960, arm the tank army with the S-75 mobile missile system ... "As Minister of Defense, Zhukov was one of the founding fathers of the Baikonur space test site. Together with other military leaders, on February 4, 1955, he signed a memorandum, according to which this particular area was chosen as a

testing ground for testing the first intercontinental ballistic missile designed by S.P. Korolev R-7 with a range of 8 thousand kilometers and cruise missiles . With the participation of Zhukov, the construction of combat launch stations began in the areas of Vorkuta and Arkhangelsk, the Angara facility, now known as the Plesetsk cosmodrome. Georgy Konstantinovich had to deal with new tests of nuclear weapons, more powerful than at the Totsk test site. In November 1955, as Minister of Defense, he took part in the explosion of a hydrogen bomb at the Semipalatinsk test site. The epicenter of the explosion was only 25 kilometers from the observers, and the repeated roar frightened those who got up early from the ground. Cloudy weather, and an explosion

at an altitude of 1800 meters behind the clouds, did not allow observing the hydrogen "mushroom", but the flash, and then the thick black cloud covering half the sky, were clearly visible. The shock wave, although not of dangerous destructive force, reached Semipalatinsk and other settlements of Kazakhstan, remote at a distance of three hundred kilometers.

The Soviet Army developed special instructions for conducting combat operations with the use of nuclear weapons. But, according to some experts, the first of them were hastily copied from American instructions and were met by a number of military leaders and many officers with hidden, and in some places open opposition. For example, the commander of the Belarusian Military District, Marshal of the Soviet Union S.K. Timoshenko, generally ordered these instructions not to be shown to anyone and sent them to the troops only after the insistent demands of the Minister of Defense. Tymoshenko did not believe that nuclear weapons could be used, and expressed confidence that they would suffer the same fate as chemical weapons in World War II. In January-February 1957, G.K. Zhukov made a visit to India, where he made a big report at the headquarters college of the Armed Forces of the Republic. The report touched upon

many important problems of military history and topical military-theoretical issues.

Speaking about the actions of the Soviet military leadership on the eve of the Great Patriotic War, Georgy Konstantinovich noted that the General Staff and the High Command basically knew about the concentration of German troops near the borders of the USSR. But Stalin "believed too much in Hitler's assurances of his benevolence towards the Soviet Union, and therefore no special measures were taken to repel a possible enemy strike." Zhukov emphasized the main conclusion: "The feat of the Soviet people and their army in World War II is of great international importance. The Soviet people bore on their shoulders the brunt of the struggle against Nazi Germany and, at the cost of huge losses, contributed to the deliverance of mankind from fascism.

Regarding the most topical problems at that time, he noted the following: "I am often asked about the nature of the war of the future: will nuclear and thermonuclear weapons be used, what role will land, naval and air forces play in future wars? Neither I nor anyone else can answer these questions with exhaustive completeness now, since all wars - large and small - arise, are waged and end in specific political, geographical and economic conditions. Their character will be influenced by the level and availability of weapons and technical means of struggle. It is one thing when wars break out between coalitions of great powers, and another thing when they break out between individual countries. It is clear, however, that modern wars, if they are organized against the will of peace-loving peoples, will be fought in an extremely tense situation both on land and at sea and in the air. Modern warfare will cover not only the immediate theaters of operations, but also the entire rear of the belligerents. ...Where it starts, how it will develop and how the war will end - it will depend on the circumstances. Will it be carried out in certain phases, as Montgomery claims in his lecture at the Institute of Technology in the USA? Any fortune-telling in this direction has no serious basis. Georgy Konstantinovich emphasized

the need to "look farsight into the future, not to be held captive by the experience of the past war, not to proceed from data that corresponded to the conditions of the last war and which, very possibly, will not meet the requirements and conditions of a new war." He believed that in the event of a war between the coalitions of the great powers, nuclear and thermonuclear weapons would be used.

"But this weapon brings death and destruction to humanity. The peoples must resolutely curb those who, in their insane desire for dominance, are trying to base their calculations on the use of these weapons. As for the Soviet Union, you know that we stand for the complete destruction and prohibition of these deadly weapons, and not because US politicians are trying to prove that they have more nuclear weapons than the USSR. No, it's another question - who has more? Hitler also considered the USSR to be a politically and economically weak state, but it turned out quite differently. Germany paid dearly for the adventurism of Hitler and his government. After a visit to India, Zhukov developed his views on a number of military theoretical problems at a military-scientific conference of the leadership of the Armed Forces, held in May 1957.

Using the book by M.A. Gareev "Marshal Zhukov. The greatness and uniqueness of military leadership", let's focus on the most characteristic.

"In order for the armed forces to always be at the height of their tasks," Zhukov said, "we, the immediate leaders of the army and navy, our military scientific personnel must look far ahead and take good account of the dynamic process in science and technology that is so characteristic of post-war period". He noted with concern that the achievements of science and technology began to noticeably outpace military-theoretical thought. Among the main problems, taking into account the bitter experience of 1941, he singled out, first of all,

the problem of the initial period of the war. In their activities, the armed forces must always be ready to thwart an impending strike in its very bud, depriving the enemy of any opportunity to launch military operations in an organized manner. At the same time, Zhukov rejected the proposals of I.Kh. Zhukov emphasized that it was impossible to put the question in this way and that in the military-political plan the Soviet military doctrine remained defensive (*italics mine. - V.D.*).

In conditions when the enemy can deliver a powerful surprise strike from the air with aircraft and missiles using atomic weapons, questions of the struggle for air supremacy acquire decisive importance. In this regard, the tasks of creating a new air defense and anti-missile defense system were highlighted. Under the leadership of Zhukov, fundamental changes were made in the operational

training of the command and staffs, in the combat training of the troops and forces of the fleet. He raised the question of eliminating seasonality in combat training, when at the beginning of the academic year individual training was carried out, then sequential training of units, and only in the second half of the year or towards the end of the year did it come to combat coordination of units and formations. As a result, they remained insufficiently combat-ready for at least six months. The reorganization of the exercises was aimed at ensuring that the troops were ready to perform combat missions at any time.

Georgy Konstantinovich perfectly understood what the lag behind the achievements of scientific thought could turn out for the Armed Forces. Therefore, he paid special attention to the training and education of military personnel, the restructuring of the educational process in military educational institutions. He considered it an exceptionally useful thing to involve the teaching staff of military academies in command-staff and military exercises.

The Main Military Scientific Directorate was created in the General Staff, the head of which was General of the Army V.V. Kurasov. In addition, the post of First Deputy Minister of Defense for Military Science was established, to which A.M. Vasilevsky was appointed. Possibly, Zhukov was the only Minister of Defense in the entire history of our Armed Forces who personally got acquainted with a dozen dissertations devoted to the problems of military art. And he was depressed by their helplessness and isolation from life and real problems. So

knowingly noted that the works for the competition of scientific degrees contain only comments on the instructions of senior commanders and official interpretations, a retelling of other people's thoughts. He resolutely spoke out in favor of increasing the exactingness in the field of military scientific research and the possibility of disqualifying such "scientists".

Showing special demands on the preservation of military secrets, Zhukov at the same time believed that serious scientific research could not be carried out if specialists did not have the necessary reliable information. Therefore, he instructed that scientists should not only have access to the latest models of weapons and military equipment, but also get acquainted with promising research and design work. Not only new scientific ideas were needed - they had to be brought to the attention of the officers in a timely manner. Under him, the development and publication of a series of books "Officer's Library" began, the task was set to hold military scientific conferences of the Armed Forces annually, and in districts and fleets - twice a year. Another touch to Zhukov's activities as Minister of Defense: he introduced mandatory physical training for all categories of generals and officers, making it an official duty.

Interesting memories of Zhukov were left by the former minister Foreign Affairs of the USSR A.A. Gromyko.

"I happened to meet with Marshal Zhukov many times, especially after my appointment as Minister of Foreign Affairs (in February 1957. - V.D.) ... Two meetings ran into my memory. One of them was during a joint trip to Bucharest in April 1957 to sign the Soviet-Romanian agreement on the legal status of Soviet troops temporarily stationed in Romania. Another - at the end of May 1957 during a trip with a similar purpose to Hungary.

When we flew in an airplane, we sat next to each other, quickly found common topics for conversation. And then, on the way to Romania, an interesting conversation took place. Zhukov talked about the past war. ... I remember the marshal's

energetic statements about the important role played by harsh measures to strengthen discipline in the troops, especially at the final stage of the war. It was necessary to prevent relaxation and carelessness. The measures taken had a positive effect on the combat capability of our army. These statements of Zhukov, apparently, were dictated by the fact that, as is known, he was personally involved in very strict actions aimed at maintaining a high level of discipline of the Soviet soldier.

With undisguised joy, Zhukov spoke about the successful testing of a new missile weapon that had already entered service with the Soviet army ... When we were in Bucharest, after all the official meetings in the evening, as it were, we continued the conversation we started on the plane. Good mood did not leave the marshal. I noticed that he always felt less constrained if he was not in the company of Khrushchev. Everyone knew General Zhukov..." To Gromyko's question whether he was often worried about the problem of personal security at

the front, especially when hot battles were taking place, Zhukov replied: "First of all, I must note that there is no person who would not be afraid of a bullet, especially when there is a battle. But after all, the commander, especially this applies to the highest command staff, is so absorbed in the course of the battle that the question of personal safety for him, as

rule does not exist. In these words, according to Andrey Andreevich, there was neither a pose, nor a show. Zhukov spoke frankly, candidly, sincerely. Gromyko emphasized that, while talking with him,

Zhukov never made critical statements about Stalin and only said that the Supreme Commander recognized the enormous merits of the commander in chief. He placed the blame unpreparedness of the army to repel German ^{Stalin} ^{How} for the aggression not on the military, but primarily on the political leadership, and believed that decisions at the highest level had a negative effect on the military side of the matter. "With the bitterness of a illustrious warrior," Gromyko noted, "he spoke of the enormous harm that Stalin's reprisal against the highest echelon of military commanders had inflicted on the country on the eve of the war."

Another passage from Gromyko's memoirs is also important: "Sometimes people who know Zhukov, especially journalists, noting his services to the country, they did not miss the opportunity to emphasize his harshness and cruelty as a military leader. Moreover, they gave a description of his behavior during conversations with them. Everything was presented as if he was simply distinguished by intemperance. It can be assumed that at the front, especially during the battle, he was sharp and, as they say, did not go into his pocket for a word.

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But in a normal setting, even in the course of a heated discussion - and I have seen such a lot of times - he never lost control of himself. Moreover, he always showed a model of correctness, even when internal tension was felt. I never once heard him flare up and utter harsh words. I know him as a man of principle. I strongly affirm that he is undeservedly credited with striving in every

possible way to exalt his role in the war and in command of the troops. As you know, such slanders even led to a change in his official position ... "In June 1957, Zhukov again provided decisive assistance to Khrushchev. What is called, on your head. Then the majority of the members of the Presidium of the Central Committee of the CPSU, headed by Molotov, Kaganovich and Malenkov, decided

to remove Nikita Sergeevich from the post of first secretary. He did not obey, declaring that only the Plenum of the Central Committee was competent to decide such a question. Khrushchev was supported by the head of the KGB Serov and Zhukov. Georgy Konstantinovich spoke decisively: "I categorically insist on the urgent convocation of the Plenum of the Central Committee. The question is much broader than the group proposes. I want to raise the question of Molotov, Kaganovich, Voroshilov and Malenkov at the plenum. I have in my hands materials about their bloody atrocities together with Stalin in 1937-38, and they have no place in the Presidium of the Central Committee and even in the Central Committee of the CPSU. And if today a group decides to remove Khrushchev from the post of first secretary, I will not obey this decision and will immediately appeal to the party through the party organizations of the armed forces.

Zhukov explained such an unusually harsh statement by the need for a decisive psychological attack on the anti-Party group in order to delay the time until the arrival of members of the Central Committee, who were already being transferred to Moscow by military aircraft. The Plenum of the Central

Committee of the CPSU began its work on June 22. It was opened by Zhukov, who received sufficient material from Khrushchev and Serov about

crimes of members of the "anti-party group". Among other things, he noted that "the guilt of Malenkov is greater than the guilt of Kaganovich and Molotov, because he was entrusted with monitoring the NKVD. He was the direct organizer and executor of this black, dishonest, anti-people work to exterminate our best cadres. Not only did Malenkov not repent of his criminal activities before the Central Committee, but until recently he kept in a safe the documents of the operational observation of the NKVD ... These are documents with materials of observation of a number of Marshals of the Soviet Union, a number of senior officials, including Budyonny, Zhukov, after Konev, after Voroshilov and others, with a recording of overheard conversations in 58 volumes. Zhukov called for the most severe measures to be taken against the "anti-party group", while citing execution lists autographed by Molotov, Malenkov, Kaganovich, Voroshilov.

He did not guess, in his soldierly naivety, that Khrushchev himself approved the lists for listening to high-ranking officials in the Central Committee. Both before and after this event, Khrushchev was constantly supplied with KGB reports about what Georgy Konstantinovich was doing, saying and breathing.

Nikita Sergeevich kept his post. The plenum removed Kaganovich, Malenkov and Molotov from the membership of the Presidium of the Central Committee of the CPSU, and Shepilov - from the candidates for membership of the

Presidium of the Central Committee. Already during the Plenum, it became clear to all those present: there would be no more friendship between Zhukov and Serov. Saburov stated in his speech: "I told Zhukov that Serov was spying on him, and he answered me: 'Let him try, I will demolish him in no time, and there will be no Lubyanka left.'" A few months later, Serov became one of the active opponents of Georgy Konstantinovich. But the main thing was

different: the top political leadership, and first of all Nikita Sergeevich, was frightened by the firmness, decisiveness and complete independence of Georgy Konstantinovich. At the same time, Khrushchev had enough information about the conflicts between the Minister of Defense and the heads of other departments, about his alleged desire to subordinate some power structures to the Ministry of Defense. For example, the Minister of Internal Affairs N.P. Dudorov believed: "Zhukov was very active and sought to take all internal and border troops from the Ministry of Internal Affairs system to the Ministry of Defense system as quickly as possible. He also tried to disarm the police. These plans of his, as it became known later, were not accidental - he aspired, like Bonaparte, to the highest power. The Central Committee of the CPSU on some incorrect, in my opinion, attitudes on the part of the USSR Ministry of Defense in resolving important

issues in the work of the USSR Ministry of Internal Affairs. When considering issues related to the

work of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, for reasons unknown to me, the Minister of Defense Comrade Zhukov G.K. takes the wrong position, and sometimes the decisions adopted by the Central Committee and

The Government of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Ministry of Defense are not implemented or created all sorts of slingshots in their implementation.

Let me give you a few examples to prove it. Soon after my appointment as Minister of the Interior, in early 1956, the Minister of Defense Comrade Zhukov instructed his deputy Comrade Bagramyan to deal with the border and internal troops of the Ministry of Internal Affairs in order to reduce them or withdraw these troops from the Ministry of Internal Affairs to the system of the USSR Ministry of Defense. Tov. Baghranyan summoned the leading officials of the Main Directorate of Internal Troops and the Main Directorate of Border Troops, their headquarters, and dealt with this issue for several days. I did not know about this ... I asked Comrade. Zhukov to do this work with me and expressed his objections regarding the transfer of troops from the system of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. In response to this, Zhukov told me: "You, Comrade Dudorov, are not starting your activities as Minister of Internal Affairs of the USSR with the wrong thing" ... "The letter noted that the Ministry of Defense does not provide information on the air situation to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, as required

by the relevant documents that Zhukov prevents the rearmament of the troops of the Ministry of Internal Affairs with new types of weapons, does not allocate a conscript contingent for them, and opposes the introduction of military uniforms for the police. "My repeated conversations personally with Comrade. Zhukov with a request to remove the objections did not lead to anything, writes Dudorov. - Once I came to Comrade. Zhukov with a group of police officers dressed in a new uniform to show him in kind, but this did not help, and his swearing and shouting at the police offended the police officers.

Once Comrade. Zhukov bluntly warned me that if I "drag" any decision on any issue of the Ministry of Internal Affairs to the Central Committee of the CPSU or the Council of Ministers of the USSR without his knowledge and consent, then he would make me a big mess. This warning surprised me greatly..."⁵⁰⁸

Outwardly, everything was still going well. On October 3, 1957, Zhukov flew to Sevastopol, and in the evening of the same day, on the cruiser Kuibyshev, accompanied by the destroyers Shiny and Experienced, he left for Yugoslavia. The correspondent of the Krasnaya Zvezda

newspaper, Captain 1st Rank S. Bystrov, spoke in detail about this trip. The Navy, headed by the First Deputy Commander-in-Chief of the Navy, Admiral A.G. Golovko. Together with the members of the commission, he meticulously examined the ship, and then gathered the entire officer staff of the ship in the wardroom and emphasized: "You will represent Zhukov not only the Black Sea Fleet, but all of us. And frankly, if you find anything, you will be unhappy. And then you will not find protection anywhere. When approaching the Bosphorus, the Kuibyshev cruiser, as expected, exchanged call signs with the Turkish signal post at Cape Shile. G.K. Zhukov stood on the bridge in a sailor's beret, which was issued to him

⁵⁰⁸ Ibid. pp. 513–514.

⁵⁰⁹ See: Bystrov S. In October 1957. The last days before the resignation of G.K. Zhukov // A red star. 1989. May 19.

on the ship, since the marshal's cap on the very first day was almost blown overboard by the wind, but the sailor gunner of the anti-aircraft gun managed to catch it on the fly. The dexterity of the sailor aroused admiration in Zhukov. Meanwhile, the signalman of the cruiser received a semaphore from the Turkish post: "To the Grand Marshal of the Soviet Union, the highly esteemed commander of the Second World War. We greet and congratulate you on entering Turkish waters ... "Georgy Konstantinovich was surprised and asked Mikhailin: "Is everyone greeted like that? The commander of the ship replied that only Zhukov was greeted in this way, which the marshal was pleasantly flattered by. Several American warships were stationed in the Bosphorus: an aircraft carrier, a cruiser, two frigates, and destroyers. The crews were lined up in a large gathering on the upper decks, all in white, playing "Passing". The semaphore from them to Zhukov is a welcome, long one. The Minister's response was, as is customary in such cases, short: "Thank you."

In Belgrade, Zhukov paid a visit to Yugoslav President Josip Broz Tito and State Secretary for National Defense Ivan Goshnyak. He traveled a lot around the country, visited military units, attended military maneuvers. From Yugoslavia, he flew to Albania. While Georgy Konstantinovich was making his voyage,

Khrushchev organized an urgent meeting of the Presidium of the Central Committee of the CPSU, at which the head of the Main Political Directorate of the Soviet Army and Navy, Colonel-General A.S. Zheltov, made a report. Members of the Presidium decided to hold party activists in the military districts condemning G.K. Zhukov for neglecting political work in the troops and creating a cult of his own personality in the army. On October 22–23, a meeting of the party activists of the Moscow garrison and the central apparatus of the Ministry of Defense took place in the Kremlin. On a note: "Why is Zhukov not on the asset?" - Khrushchev sharply replied that it was not necessary to ask about this, but about why he allowed such outrages. Thanks to the loyalty of General S.M. Shtemenko, who, being the head of the Main Intelligence Directorate, had his own connection,

not controlled by anyone, Zhukov learned about the events. Subsequently, Khrushchev searched long and hard for the one who informed Zhukov, and after finding out that the message had gone through military intelligence, he fired Shtemenko from his job. On October 26, Zhukov flew from the Albanian capital Tirana to Moscow. Directly from the plane, he sent a telegram to G.A. Semenova: "I would like to take a break from this tedious trip, but, apparently, there

is a lot of work to be done ... I experience a joyful feeling of meeting you and my daughter. I missed both of you very much ... Probably Masha has grown up and become even nicer. I would like her to be more like me, but certainly with your eyes, which I love very, very much ... "The plane with the Minister of Defense landed at Vnukovo Airport. Georgy Konstantinovich was met by the Marshals of the Soviet Union and the commanders-in-chief of all types of the Armed Forces, as well as an employee of the Presidium of the Central Committee of the CPSU Chernukha. He approached Zhukov and said that he

was immediately invited to a meeting of the Presidium of the Central Committee. At the meeting of the Presidium of the Central Committee, the floor was given to M.A. Suslov. He accused the Minister of Defense of pursuing the wrong political line, ignoring political workers and the Main Political Directorate of the Soviet Army and Navy.

A.I. Mikoyan added: "I don't understand and still care about one phrase said by Zhukov at the Presidium of the Central Committee while working on the Malenkov-Molotov anti-party group. Zhukov then said: "If the decision proposed by Malenkov (on the removal of Khrushchev. - V.D.) is adopted, then he, Zhukov, will not obey the decision and will turn to the army. What does it mean?"". Zhukov clarified that he intended to apply through

party organizations of the army to the party, not to the army.

Khrushchev made a lengthy speech at the meeting. He said that everything that Zhukov presents under the guise of strengthening unity of command is a real dictatorship, a dangerous business. Georgy Konstantinovich was accused of creating a school of saboteurs that was not controlled by anyone, which only he and Shtemenko knew about, as well as the formation of a special division. Zhukov's explanations that ordinary formations were created to conduct reconnaissance and destroy enemy rocket launchers did not satisfy anyone. Accusations of Bonapartism followed. Then Khrushchev provided those who wished to familiarize themselves with materials about Zhukov's foreign trips, in which his posturing and enormous self-conceit were allegedly manifested.

He argues as follows: I am the Minister of Defense, and everything that relates to the troops should pass only through me and no one else. And this is presented under the guise of strengthening unity of command? No, this is a real dictatorship, this is a dangerous business. "This whole story, prepared against

me somehow like a thief, was a complete surprise," recalled Georgy Konstantinovich. - The situation was complicated by the fact that at that time I had the flu. I could not quickly collect my thoughts, although this was not the first time I had to deal with such tricks. However, I felt that Khrushchev, Brezhnev, Mikoyan, Suslov and Kirilenko decided to remove me from the Presidium of the Central Committee. Apparently, as a too recalcitrant and dangerous political competitor, to get rid of the one to whom Khrushchev remained in debt during the period of the struggle against the anti-party group Malenkov-Molotov. This idea was confirmed by Mikoyan's speech at the plenum, where he said: "Frankly speaking, we are afraid of Zhukov." The plenum of the Central Committee of the CPSU with one issue on the agenda: "On the improvement of party political work in the Soviet Army and Navy" began its work on October 28, 1957. The report was made by

Suslov. "... Serious shortcomings and distortions in party political work have been revealed ... These shortcomings and distortions, as it has now been established, are generated by a gross violation of the party Leninist principles of

leadership of the Ministry of Defense and the Soviet Army on the part of Comrade Zhukov.

... Indiscriminate beating of commanding and political cadres ... remove, write off, fire, expel, tear off the stripes, tear off the shoulder straps ... used to chatting for 40 years, lost all scent, like old cats. It is he (Zhukov. - V.D.) talking about political workers! .. The fact that Zhukov has lost his elementary sense of modesty is also

evidenced by this fact. The minister instructed to buy, for the purpose of personal advertising, to put in the Museum of the Soviet Army a picture painted by the artist, representing the following view: the general background is burning Berlin and the Brandenburg Gate, against this background a rearing horse tramples the banners of the defeated states, and a comrade majestically sits on a horse

Zhukov...

Comrade Zhukov ignores the Central Committee. Recently, the Presidium of the Central Committee learned that Comrade Zhukov, without the knowledge of the Central Committee, decided to organize a school of saboteurs for more than two thousand students ... Comrade Zhukov did not even consider it necessary to inform the Central Committee about this school. Only three people should have known about its organization: Zhukov, Shtemenko and General Mamsurov, who was appointed head of this school. But General Mamsurov, as a communist, considered it his duty to inform the Central Committee about this illegal action of the minister ... "

The Chief of the General Staff, Marshal of the Soviet Union V.D. Sokolovsky, spoke: "To say that Comrade Zhukov misunderstood and misunderstands the role of party-political work in the army, this, of course, is untenable and frivolous, and those major mistakes that Zhukov made were, of course, not from a misunderstanding, as he said speaking here, this is wrong. The point is precisely in the line of behavior ... This special line of behavior led to taking the army into our hands in the full sense of the word and through the army to influence in one way or another, I don't want to fantasize, but to influence in one way or another, maybe even to the Presidium of the Central Committee ... "Here Khrushchev gave a remark:" Zhukov paid you the same. He me

said that the Chief of the General Staff should be replaced.

Sharp attacks on Zhukov were contained in the speech of the head of the Main Political Directorate of the SA and the Navy, Colonel-General A.S. Zheltov. "... Tov. Zhukov exalted himself unreasonably, and on this basis we had many fights. he said. - It began in 1955 ... Due to his appointment, the portrait did not appear in the national newspapers. The General Political Directorate was given such a dressing, which no one had ever seen at all. There were no words in defense of Zhukov and the speakers of Marshals Konev, Eremenko, Biryuzov, Timoshenko. Rokossovsky.

After the discussion of the issue, the floor was given to Zhukov: "Speaking before the Plenum of the Central Committee, I do not set myself the goal of somehow justifying those wrong actions that I had, those mistakes that I made ... I can now bear responsibility with my head, you you can appoint any commission in order to document it, let the marshals - members of the Central Committee, commanders say here - over the past period of time, discipline, organization, order have significantly strengthened in the army, emergency incidents have sharply decreased ... I do not want to say that this is my merit . The whole party, the Central Committee, party organizations, the Military Councils, political agencies worked, and in their work they were not guided by some hints or instructions from Zhukov, but were always guided only by the instructions of the Central Committee ... "

Zhukov did not reject the main accusation - the underestimation of political workers, since he believed that commanders who are experienced communists who know party political work well can also be party leaders. "I believed that in our army there should not be full-time, paid political workers, but it was necessary to raise, activate party organizations ... The main, leading role in our army, it seemed to me, should belong to the party organization."

Then Zhukov drew the attention of the Plenum to the strangeness of the accusations against him, to the way it was all organized. He said,

that only three weeks ago, before he was assigned to go to Yugoslavia and Albania, he said goodbye to all the members of the Central Committee, or rather to the majority, as to close friends. Not a single word was said as a complaint.

Summing up the results of the Plenum, Khrushchev, as always, delivered a lengthy speech. The desire to accuse Zhukov of intending to seize power in the country ran through her like a red thread. On November 3, 1957, Pravda published a resolution of the

Plenum of the Central Committee of the CPSU "On the improvement of party political work in the Soviet Army and Navy." It noted: "With the personal participation of Comrade Zhukov G.K. the cult of his personality began to be implanted in the Soviet Army. With the assistance of saints and sycophants, they began to exalt him in lectures and reports, in articles, films, brochures, exorbitantly exalted his person and his role in the Great Patriotic War ... T. Zhukov did not justify the trust placed in him by the Party. He turned out to be a politically untenable figure, prone to adventurism ... "By this decree, Georgy Konstantinovich was removed from the Presidium and the Central Committee of the CPSU. By decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR of October 26, 1957, Zhukov was dismissed from the post of Minister of Defense, and by Decree of the Council of Ministers of the USSR of February 27, 1958 No. 240, he was dismissed.

Marshal of the Soviet Union N.V. Ogarkov, assessing this decision, noted: "Occupying the highest military posts, he was in full view of all the leaders of the party and state, other state and party leaders, and even more so of military leaders. To be honest, many leaders envied his authority in the army and the people and were often afraid of his decisiveness, independence in decision-making, therefore, they sought to belittle his services to the Fatherland, contributed to discrediting Zhukov's name and removing him from leadership positions in the Armed Forces. Khrushchev, even many years after the massacre of Zhukov, tried to prove that the marshal was preparing a conspiracy: "When in 1957 the issue of

suppressing Zhukov's attempt to organize a military putsch with the aim of seizing power in the hands of a military junta was discussed, Moskalenko actively spoke out with accusations of Zhukov's address. Not at the general meeting of the Plenum of the Central Committee of the CPSU, but in a narrower circle of people, when Moskalenko passionately accused Zhukov of inclining to seize power, and Zhukov with his soldier's rudeness, with his soldier's directness (and I believe Zhukov that he told the truth) threw to him: "What are you accusing me of? You yourself told me more than once: what are you looking at? Take power into your own hands, take it!". Further, Khrushchev noted: "... When Zhukov became a member of the Presidium of the Central Committee, he began to gain such strength that the country's leadership had some anxiety. Members of the

Presidium of the Central Committee have repeatedly expressed the opinion that Zhukov is moving in the direction of a military coup, the seizure of personal power by him. We also received such information from a number of military men who spoke about Zhukov's Bonapartist aspirations. Gradually, facts accumulated that could not be ignored without fear of subjecting the country to a coup of the kind that is taking place in Latin America. We were forced to agree to the removal of Zhukov from his posts. This decision was difficult for me, but I had to go

nowhere."

In Pravda of November 3, along with the resolution of the Plenum of the Central Committee of the CPSU, a large article was published signed by Marshal of the Soviet Union I.S. his speech at the October plenum. Ivan Stepanovich argued that Zhukov "overestimated himself and his abilities, sought to resolve all issues of leadership of the Armed Forces on his own, without listening to the opinions of others and completely ignoring these opinions."

IS Konev criticized Zhukov's role in the Great Patriotic War. True, to begin with, he made a reservation: "The Communist Party and the Soviet people do not deny Comrade Zhukov's services to the Motherland." And then he moved on to exposing the "Marshal of Victory": "T. Zhukov should remember that there were many major mistakes and blunders in his work. Ivan Stepanovich laid on Georgy Konstantinovich a considerable share of responsibility for the unpreparedness of the Red Army to repel the German attack in 1941. In particular, he blamed him for "the simultaneous deployment of a large number of large mechanized formations without taking into account the possibility of their timely staffing with military equipment and personnel of specialists, which had a negative impact on the course of the armed struggle in the initial period of the war." And the defeat of the Germans at Stalingrad, Konev argued, was planned not by Zhukov, but by the Headquarters as a whole, and the proposals of Eremenko and Khrushchev played a special role. Ivan Stepanovich knew how to flatter the first secretary. Konev also recalled Zhukov's unsuccessful attempt, when he was a Stavka representative on the North-Western Front, to eliminate the Demyansk "cauldron" in the winter of 1942/43, and the fact that Georgy Konstantinovich released the German 1st Panzer Army from the encirclement in the spring of 1944. Concluding the article, Konev wrote that "Zhukov repeatedly spoke out against Stalin's personality cult, sharply criticizing him for his mistakes. However, this criticism was not designed to help the party overcome the negative consequences of the cult of personality, but to glorify himself ... He lost party modesty."

Later, Konev justified himself for this article: "... And what could I do then: the Plenum of the Central Committee was held, of which I was also a member. I was called and offered (more precisely, ordered) to write such an article, and I obeyed. So to speak, they gave a "party order". And the article, to be honest, was prepared without my active participation. In fact, he just signed. In 2001, the Commission under the

President of the Russian Federation for the Rehabilitation of Victims of Political Repressions assessed the charges brought by the party and state leadership of the USSR against Marshal of the Soviet Union G.K. Zhukov. It was noted that at the Plenum of the Central Committee of the CPSU, held in October 1957, with the agenda "On improving party political work in the Soviet Army and Navy," the "case" of G.K. Zhukov was actually examined. Numerous serious charges were brought against him, including plotting to seize power and attempting to establish a personal dictatorship. The audience considered it proved that G.K. Zhukov, in order to seize power, tried to subjugate, in addition to the army, the KGB and the Ministry of Internal Affairs, that is, all the law enforcement and punitive bodies of the state. According to the legislation then in force, the accusations brought by the Central Committee of the CPSU against the marshal,

actually fell under Article 58 of the Criminal Code of the RSFSR, which provided for capital punishment for such actions.

The Commission under the President of the Russian Federation for the Rehabilitation of Victims of Political Repression stated that no convincing facts were presented at the Party Plenum to confirm such monstrous accusations. The final resolution of the Plenum with incriminating language was adopted in the absence of G.K. Zhukov. The most serious accusations and the operative part of the decision were not published. Only those formulations appeared in the Soviet press where the marshal was accused of a line on the elimination of party control over the army and navy.

The study of documents and materials on the charges against Marshal G.K. Zhukov, in the opinion of the commission, confirms the need for society and the state to condemn any form of political repression as contrary to the fundamental rights and freedoms of man and citizen, further revealing the truth about the tragic past of Soviet society. ... The resignation shocked Zhukov, since military service was the whole meaning of life for him.

Later, he told K.M. Simonov: "There are things in life that cannot be forgotten. A person is simply not able to forget them, but they can be remembered in different ways. There are three different memories. You can't forget evil. This is one. You can't forget the experience. This is different. You can not forget the past, thinking about the future. This is the third.

I had to go through three difficult moments in my life. If we talk about the third of them, then obviously I am also to blame for something - there is no smoke without fire. But it was not easy to survive..."⁵¹⁰ Having survived the tragedy of the autumn of 1957, Zhukov saved himself for history.

Chapter XV. Don't lose yourself

Forgetfulness could also happen.

It could have happened because Zhukov no longer needed power, the nature of which, with his directness and honesty, Georgy Konstantinovich, most likely, did not fully understand. His business was simply to fight and serve his homeland. Oblivion could also happen as a result of the beginning

"redistribution" of personal military merits and the shameless distortion of the history of the Great Patriotic War. Forgetfulness did not happen. First of all, possessing remarkable strong-willed

qualities, Georgy Konstantinovich was able to help himself. In one of the conversations with Konstantin Simonov, he recalled: "When I was removed from the Presidium of the Central Committee and the Central Committee in 1957 and I returned home after that, I firmly decided not to lose myself, not to break down, not to become limp, not to lose willpower, as no matter how hard it is. What helped me? I did so. When he returned, he took sleeping pills. Slept for several hours. Got up. Ate. Took sleeping pills. I fell asleep again. I woke up again, took sleeping pills again, fell asleep again ... This went on for fifteen days, which I slept with short

⁵¹⁰ Op. by: Simonov K.M. Notes on the biography of G.K. Zhukov // Military History magazine. 1987. No. 11. S. 46.

breaks. And I somehow survived everything that tormented me, that sat in my memory. Everything that I would think about, argue with internally, and experience in my waking state, I experienced all this, apparently, in a dream. He argued, and argued, and was upset - all in a dream. And then, when these fifteen days passed, I went fishing. And only after that he wrote to the Central Committee, asked permission to go to the resort for treatment. This is how I survived this difficult moment.”⁵¹¹

In an atmosphere of social isolation and secret surveillance in which Zhukov found himself, his closest friends and associates helped him to withstand the heavy pressure of fabricated political accusations: marshals A.M. Vasilevsky, I.Kh. Bagramyan, S.I. Rudenko, generals N.A. Antipenko, I.I. Fedyuninsky, A.P. Beloborodov. They did not turn away and continued to communicate with him as before, but these contacts were limited at first. So, knowing about surveillance, Zhukov kept in touch with Vasilevsky only by phone or through his son, so as not to give reason to "some dreamers" to think that the two marshals were conspiring. Perhaps most often, N.A. Antipenko and his wife visited the house of Georgy Konstantinovich: he helped in solving household issues, accompanied him on trips to the sanatorium, and took an active part in holding family celebrations. "At first, my father hoped that he would not be left out of work," recalls Ella Georgievna. - After all, he was just over sixty, he retained his strength and health, the desire to use his colossal experience for military development.

One day, returning home from the institute, I saw my father in the dining room. He was sitting in an armchair by the window, holding a piece of paper in his hands, and was clearly dejected. To my question: "Dad, what happened?" - he replied that this was not the first time he had written a request to Khrushchev for any work. Ready to command a district, ready to head a military academy, to finally become an ordinary teacher. And then he received another refusal: "At present, it seems inappropriate to provide you with a job," he read out a line from the letter, even more gloomy. Surveillance of Zhukov was carried out constantly. On September 7, 1959, the KGB chairman Shelepin informs Khrushchev: "On August 19 of this year, on the occasion of the death of Lieutenant General Kryukov, the latter's wife, the famous singer Ruslanova, held a commemoration, at which, among others, were the Marshals of the Soviet Union Comrade. Budyonny S.M. and Zhukov G.K. During the conversation, the question

was raised among those present about the adopted Decree of the Council of Ministers of the USSR No. 876 of July 27, 1959 on

pensions for military personnel and their families. Tov. Zhukov stated on this issue that if he were the Minister of Defense, he would not allow the Government to adopt a new Decree on pensions for military personnel and their families. He further said that Mr. Malinovsky (Minister

of Defense. - V.D.) gave freedom of action to the head of the Main Political Directorate, General of the Army Golikov, and the latter was ruining the army.

"In the newspaper Krasnaya Zvezda," continued Zhukov, "every day they publish articles with calls to raise and strengthen the authority

⁵¹¹ Op. by: Simonov K.M. Notes on the biography of G.K. Zhukov // Military History magazine. 1987. No. 11. S. 46.

political workers and criticize commanders. As a result of such a policy, the army will be disintegrated.”

Zhukov's statements on this issue were supported by Comrade. Budyonny...”⁵¹²
The reaction was

stormy. Budyonny had to give official explanations to the CPSU Central Committee, and Zhukov himself, together with General V.A. Revyakin, was summoned to the Party Control Committee under the CPSU Central Committee. The Chairman of the Communist Party of China Shvernik in his note to the Central Committee noted: and a member of the CPSU since 1919, Comrade Zhukov G.K. discussed at the meeting of the CPC in their presence.

In his explanation, Comrade Zhukov gave a correct assessment of his behavior, stated that at first he did not attach due importance to the conversation with Revyakin and that he had now drawn the necessary conclusions for himself. Comrade Revyakin did not deny his wrong behavior. Considering all this, the Party Control Committee decided

to limit the discussion to this issue.”⁵¹³ Despite the fact that Georgy Konstantinovich “drawn the necessary conclusions for himself,” he was

kept under surveillance. In May 1963, the chairman of the KGB Semichastny sent Khrushchev “some information received recently about the mood of the former Minister of Defense G.K. Zhukov”: “In conversations with former colleagues, Zhukov tells in detail about how the meeting of the Presidium of the Central Committee CPSU, in which he was removed

from the post of Minister of Defense, and makes sharp attacks on individual members of the Presidium of the Central Committee: “The whole thing could be handled differently,” Zhukov said, “if I could bow low, but I can't bow. And then why should I bow? I don't feel guilty about anything to bow to. All this was attributed, of course, with a well-known purpose ... ”

In a conversation with one of his colleagues in the army, Zhukov spoke about R.Ya. Malinovsky as follows: “... This is a cunning person, he knows how to flatter. He never speaks against the word. 'Listen'. 'Eat'. He hides his opinion far away and tries to please. And now they are exactly what we need...”

In a conversation with Major General in the reserve Karmanov I.M. Zhukov stated:

“We have ... an unreasonable merchant scale in relation to assistance. Billions fly into outer space. About 4 billion rubles were spent on Gagarin's flight. No one has ever asked the question of what all these receptions cost, all these trips, visits of guests to us, and so on ... Bidault's wife had a fur coat made of sable, I saw it. The wife of another member of the delegation was presented with a diamond set, which contained a 12-carat diamond brooch ... All this is now reaching the broad masses of people ... Stalin had many bad traits, but no one can blame him for the carelessness of the state penny. He didn't do so many receptions, he didn't give gifts to anyone, except for an autograph on a book ... ”

⁵¹² Op. Quoted from: Krasnov V.G. Unknown Zhukov. pp. 525–526.

⁵¹³ Ibid. pp. 527–528.

In another conversation about the publication of The History of the Great Patriotic War, Zhukov said: "... This story is varnished. I believe that in this respect the description of history, although also distorted, is still more honest among the German generals, they write more truthfully. But the 'History of the Great Patriotic War' is absolutely untrue.

Now they say that the allies never helped us... But it cannot be denied that the Americans were driving us so many materials, without which we would not have been able to form our reserves and could not continue the war... We received 350,000 vehicles, and what vehicles!.. We didn't have explosives or gunpowder. There was nothing to equip rifle cartridges. The Americans really helped us out with gunpowder and explosives. And how much they drove us sheet steel. How could we quickly establish the production of tanks, if not for the American help with steel. And now they present the matter in such a way that we had all this in abundance. This is not history that was, but history that has been written. It meets the spirit of modernity. Who should be glorified, who should be kept silent about ... "

According to our information, Zhukov and his family are going to go south in the fall to one of the sanatoriums in the Moscow Region. At this time, we will take measures to familiarize ourselves with the part of the memoirs he wrote."⁵¹⁴ Once again, a "warning conversation"

follows in the Central Committee of the CPSU, which this time was held with Zhukov by Brezhnev and Serdyuk. Needless to say, Georgy Konstantinovich's reaction to this conversation in the home circle was completely recorded through listening devices and presented to Khrushchev in the form of a transcript.

Only after the removal of N.S. Khrushchev from power, some indulgences were made for the disgraced marshal. In 1965, for the first time in recent years, he appeared in public at the Kremlin Palace of Congresses at a solemn meeting dedicated to the 20th anniversary of Victory in the Great Patriotic War. The audience of many thousands greeted the appearance of Georgy Konstantinovich with a storm of applause. The evening of the same day, Georgy Konstantinovich

spent in the writers' club, where he was greeted standing up, with exclamations of "Hurrah for Zhukov!" They took a place at the solemn banquet next to the writers K.M.Simonov, S.S.Smironov, S.V.Mikhalkov, B.N.Polev.

In the same year, G.K. Zhukov divorced Alexandra Dievna and registered relations with G.A. Semenova. Marshal's adjutant I.A. Pryadukhin recalled that the love between Georgy Konstantinovich and his last wife "could only be envied ... Here Galina leaves for work, she will definitely hug her husband, kiss ... Zhukov was generally not talkative. Maybe he said some gentle words, but I did not hear. And he was always attentive to his wife. Sometimes he even made sacrifices for her. Galina Alexandrovna, for example, was very fond of going to theaters, but Georgy Konstantinovich did not at that time. Age already, no health ... But at times, nevertheless, grumble, grumble at his wife, and even gather for a performance.

⁵¹⁴ Ibid. pp. 528–529.

According to the memoirs of Zhukov's daughter Maria, "the parents cordially greeted the guests, and they themselves went to visit, were welcome in the houses of their friends. They were a wonderful couple, their mutual love caused that amazing phenomenon when people, as it were, begin to glow with an inner light, and this light attracted people ... ". Only some time later,

Zhukov's daughters Era and Ella were reconciled with Galina Alexandrovna, and Era Georgievna quite sincerely wrote in her memoirs: "Ella and I are grateful to Galina Alexandrovna for the fact that dad spent the last years of his life in an atmosphere of love and attention." Outwardly, the new leadership of the country sought to show its loyalty to G.K.

Zhukov. By a decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR of December 1, 1966, he was awarded the Order of Lenin in connection with the 70th anniversary of his birth and for services to the Armed Forces, and by a decree of February 22, 1968, he was awarded the Order of the October Revolution for his services in building and strengthening the army and on the occasion of her 50th birthday. But in essence, little has changed. Here is what N.A. Svetlishin wrote: "According to the decision of the editorial board (Military History Journal. - V.D.), I called Marshals of the Soviet Union I.S. Konev, V.D. Sokolovsky, A.M. Vasilevsky with a proposal to prepare an essay "From a soldier to a marshal" for the 70th anniversary of G.K. Zhukov. They refused. And then I was assigned to write the essay. To great joy, Georgy Konstantinovich agreed with the author's candidacy."⁵¹⁵ According to General of the Army M.A. Gareev, Marshal A.M. that for various reasons he was not always able to maintain a principled and fair position in relation to Zhukov, corresponding to his real deep respect for his combat comrade-in-arms. Georgy Konstantinovich continued, as far as it was possible in those conditions, to follow the development of military affairs. An interesting testimony was left by A.I. In this book, I presented the results of many years of flight tests of all types of domestic helicopters, in which I was directly involved. And in the fall of 1965, Georgy Konstantinovich unexpectedly called me

and offered to meet. To my surprise, he talked about the possibility of using helicopters on the battlefield. By that time, the use of helicopters in the army was no longer disputed by anyone, but their scope was limited to transport functions. Of course, I was not privy to all the secrets of the military industry, but even in informal conversations with the then leadership of the Air Force and with aircraft designers, helicopter pilots, there was no talk of this. And Zhukov bombarded me with specific questions, trying to assess how applicable the helicopter is on the battlefield, what requirements such a machine should meet. He remained open minded

⁵¹⁵ Svetlishin N. Marshal Zhukov: Steep steps of fate // Soviet warrior. 1988. No. 8. S. 14.

military commander, even being deprived of the opportunity to somehow influence the development of affairs in the army.

Helped to live and supported the health of the passion for hunting. Once in Tuva, before the start of a wild boar hunt, Georgy Konstantinovich was introduced to V.N. Bushchinsky, an experienced hunter and first-class shooter, in the past a fighter pilot. The marshal shared his doubts about his weapon, which he himself has not yet fired. At the same time, he took out a new carbine from the case, which was structurally different from those known at that time. It was designed and manufactured in Germany, in the city of Suhl personally for Zhukov, and seven carbines were made and the best one was selected, and all the rest were destroyed along with the design documentation. Holding the carbine in his hands and throwing it over his shoulder, as masters do, Viktor Nikolayevich expressed his admiration with excitement. But, remembering the marshal's doubts, he offered him his proven and reliable 9 mm caliber fitting without hesitation. And the marshal accepted this offer with a smile. After the hunt, he, having appreciated the skillful actions of Bushchinsky, presented him with his carbine.

Although after the celebrations on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the Victory, Zhukov's mood improved significantly, his health was deteriorating. In the essay "Marshal Georgy Konstantinovich Zhukov (Doctor's Notes)", G. A. Alekseev tells about this: "Fate brought me together with an

outstanding commander of our time quite by accident. I then worked at the Main Military Hospital named after N.N. Burdenko, headed the cardiology department. The senior resident of the therapeutic department Galina Alexandrovna Semenova, the marshal's wife, also worked here. Once, it was in 1965, she came up to me: "Maybe look at George? There is something wrong with his heart."

Such a request, of course, puzzled me. It was known that the marshal was under medical observation in the Kremlin hospital. Although he was in disgrace, but to interfere in the treatment of such an eminent patient seemed incorrect in relation to colleagues of the Kremlin hospital. On the other hand, I did not want to refuse the respected Galina Alexandrovna by everyone. After consulting with the leadership of the Central Military Medical Directorate, I agreed.

At the marshal's dacha I was met with restraint. He answered questions briefly, reluctantly spoke about previous illnesses. From the medical book and archival case histories, it was possible to establish that he began to notice pains in the region of the heart and behind the sternum, as well as periodic headaches and slight dizziness, from 1947–1948. Dispensary and inpatient examination revealed coronary heart disease and initial atherosclerosis of the cerebral arteries. The marshal did not always observe the regimen recommended by doctors for limiting physical activity, he continued to systematically engage in physical education (morning exercises, horseback riding, skiing, hunting, fishing, etc.). In the autumn of 1965, Georgy Konstantinovich suffered a myocardial infarction and was treated at the Central Military Hospital. Mandryki. The disease proceeded

without complications, and in order to consolidate the results of treatment, he was transferred to the Arkhangelskoye military sanatorium. The state of health quickly improved, and Zhukov continued an active lifestyle: he traveled with his cousin M.M.

fishing, occasionally hunting, spent a lot of time in the country garden, visited a sanatorium in the Baltic states, visited Moscow theaters.

But most importantly, he continued to collect materials for his memoirs. For this purpose, he often traveled to Podolsk, to the Central Archive of the Ministry of Defense, and to the General Staff. His first publications devoted to the events of the Great Patriotic War appeared in the press. In 1966, Zhukov's article "The first strategic defeat of the Wehrmacht" was published in the book "The Failure of the Hitler Offensive on Moscow", and the following year in the "Military History Journal" - the article "On the Kursk Bulge".

The publishing house of the Novosti Press Agency (APN) offered Georgy Konstantinovich to publish his memoirs of the Great Patriotic War. The negotiations held with the author by the future editor of his book A.D. Mirkina were successful, and in August 1965 an agreement was signed for the publication of the book "Memoirs and Reflections". Recalling her first meeting with Zhukov, Mirkina wrote: "Zhukov walks towards him with

a wide, firm step, in a simple home suit, a bluish-gray shirt with an open collar, short sleeves, gray trousers, strong, thick-set, all knocked down, expressive large features faces, a sharp look that pierces you through and through - and I feel my legs give way. The fears turned out to be in vain: Georgy Konstantinovich met her kindly and willingly answered questions. The office where Georgy Konstantinovich worked was about twenty meters, cozy, with a bay window. The writing table, upholstered in green morocco, moved away from the three-leaf window, a comfortable chair. Along the walls are bookcases, on the

table are open books, sheets of manuscript. According to the editor of the future book, "Georgy Konstantinovich was completely immersed in work - he collected archival material, met with his combat comrades-in-arms - former front commanders, members of military councils, looked through the new military historical and military memoirs that were published. He wrote enthusiastically, passionately, recklessly, usually in the evenings and well after midnight. He did not like to dictate, he wrote by hand - "this is how the thought is better formulated, everything superfluous disappears." "Memories and Reflections" was his first literary experience.

Marshal's doctor G.K. Alekseev noted: "For many years I had to be an unwitting witness to the titanic work of Georgy Konstantinovich. He categorically refused the literary assistance offered to him by our well-known writers Konstantin Simonov and Sergei Smirnov, declaring: "I must write the book myself." He was struck by the highest responsibility for his work, his rejection of any deviations from the truth. While working on the book, Georgy Konstantinovich spoke more than once about the importance he attaches to the truthfulness of the description of events. It was obvious that he sincerely strives for this, that in life, in communication with friends, he does not tolerate any deceit, even over trifles. I can give one example. For a number of years he maintained a relationship with a medical scientist. One day, an acquaintance of his did not come to an agreed meeting, explaining this by unexpected employment in the clinic. His wife, apparently not knowing her husband's explanation, after 2-3 days in the presence of the marshal with delight

told what an interesting performance they watched in the theater that day. After this incident, all relations between them were interrupted forever.

G.K. Zhukov worked on the book, despite the fact that the disease relentlessly pursued him. In June 1967, despite active drug therapy, Georgy Konstantinovich developed a second myocardial infarction, which, like the first one, proceeded without complications. On this sad events for the marshal do not stop. At the end of the year, Galina Alexandrovna fell ill, she needed a serious oncological operation, which was performed by Academician N.N. Blokhin. Already during the operation, it turned out that it was carried out too late. Excited by what had happened, with a heavy mood, Georgy Konstantinovich went to the Arkhangelskoye sanatorium, where, with great anxiety, he daily waited for bad news from the hospital. "One of these days I was in a sanatorium, I went to the marshal," recalls G.K. Alekseev. - He was tense, gloomy, told me that he was terribly worried about the outcome of the operation. By the way, he noticed about himself that he began to feel some kind of uncertainty when walking, he was appointed for a consultation with a neurologist. A few days later, a catastrophe occurred - a severe ischemic stroke. An urgent consultation with the participation of professors E.I. Chazov, E.V. Schmidt and other top-class specialists recognized the immediate evacuation of the patient to the intensive care unit of the Kremlin hospital as absolutely necessary, which was carried out with maximum precautions on a special resuscitation machine ... The main goal was achieved, life is saved, mental activity is completely preserved, but some of the consequences of a stroke remain.

Preparation for printing of the first edition of Zhukov's memoirs took three years. To finalize it, a military specialist was also needed for editing. "Neither at the Institute of Military History, nor in the Military Publishing House, nor in the Military History Journal," Mirkina recalled, "nowhere, wherever we turned, was there a single person who would agree to become a special editor of the book of the famous marshal - at that time it was, in my opinion, could cost a military career. The publication of the book in 1969 had a beneficial effect on Georgy Konstantinovich. He

seemed to be rejuvenated, became much more cheerful. The success of the book gave him new vitality, inspired him. And the success was amazing: to all the bookstores where "Memoirs and Reflections" were sold, huge queues lined up.

But the joy, according to A.D. Mirkina, was overshadowed by one unpleasant incident. The book "was already prepared for typesetting a long time ago, but there was no final permission. Something was holding him back. Finally, they made it clear that L.I. Brezhnev wanted Marshal Zhukov to mention him in his book. Mentioned. In addition to the far-

fetched plot that Zhukov was allegedly going to call on the head of the political department of the 18th Army, L. I. Brezhnev, and consult with him on some strategic issues, they were also forced to enter the names of A. A. Epishev, M. Kh. Kalashnik into the book and other political workers. Grechko and Epishev, in a note to the Central Committee of the CPSU about the manuscript of Zhukov's book, among the many sins and shortcomings, indicated the following: "G.K.

districts, in the training of personnel and the training of command personnel. He pays too much attention to the repressions of 1937-1938."

Zhukov's "forgetfulness" regarding the "feats" of eminent party leaders was remembered by him later. In March 1971, the XXIV Congress of the CPSU opened. Zhukov is a delegate from the Moscow region. Made a new uniform. Worried. Gathered strength. But ... my wife was denied a guest ticket. They called L.I. Brezhnev, and he showed bewilderment: is the marshal really going to the congress? And he advised me not to. This is too heavy an event for the health of a person at his age.

Immediately after this conversation, visits and calls from "well-wishers" began: everyone vied with each other to persuade the marshal not to go to the congress - "to save his health." Zhukov

didn't mind. He understood everything.

The state of health of Georgy Konstantinovich after this incident deteriorated sharply. They used the most modern methods of treatment for those times, invited medical luminaries. On May 23, 1971, a consultation of doctors was held at Zhukov's dacha with the participation of prominent French scientists - the neurosurgeon J. Guyot and the neuropathologist P. Rondo. According to eyewitnesses, Professor Guyot knelt before Zhukov and said: "I am flattered to meet you and glad that I have the honor to see the man who saved Europe from fascism." The consultation lasted about five hours, and as a result of the discussion, the possibility of surgical treatment was completely rejected. Some French drugs were proposed in combination with psychotherapeutic measures, which also did not make significant changes in the patient's condition. The use of acupuncture treatment in 1973, which was conducted by the Japanese professor S. Okabe, did not have the desired effect on improving Zhukov's health.

Enduring the suffering that the illness brought him, in dealing with doctors, Georgy Konstantinovich, although he was sometimes unrestrained, even severe, he never allowed himself to be rude, to raise his voice. "Once in the hospital, on one of his difficult days, when he saw me in the council," recalls G.K. Alekseev, "he called the head of the department and asked why I was here. He explained and handed it to me. I realized that my presence in the hospital was somehow unpleasant for him, and I stopped going there. Two weeks later, late in the evening, the doctor on duty at the Kremlin hospital calls me at home and says that the marshal asks me to come to him now. I arrive, greets him kindly and, as if nothing had happened, asks to listen to his heart, to look at his stomach in connection with the unpleasant sensations that have appeared. After examining him, I calmed him down and recommended taking some medication. Soon the discomfort disappeared. Another time, shortly after I was awarded the next military rank, I appeared in a new uniform at the dacha. I looked, Georgy Konstantinovich - not a gesture, not a sound, as if he didn't notice that I was in a different guise, until Galina Alexandrovna drew his attention: "Georgy, why don't you congratulate Georgy Konstantinovich?" Only after that he shook my hand. What is it - jealousy for us, living a normal life, or the bitterness of being abandoned? So it remains unclear to me."

Overcoming excruciating facial pains, Georgy Konstantinovich did not stop work on preparing the second edition of the book. In this period

fate dealt him another blow - on November 13, 1973, Galina Aleksandrovna died. On the day of her death, Georgy Konstantinovich said: "I can't survive this anymore." With the help of Marshal I.Kh. Bagramyan and General of the Army I.I. Fedyuninsky, he and his daughter came to the mourning hall to say goodbye to his wife, but could no longer get to the cemetery. All the following days he tried to restore his strength, tried to work on a book, but the grief was too great, he could not overcome it. At the end of December, his condition deteriorated sharply, and Georgy Konstantinovich was urgently taken to the hospital. The long struggle of doctors for his life was unsuccessful. On June 18, 1974, the heart of the great commander stopped.

The funeral of Marshal of the Soviet Union G.K. Zhukov took place on June 21, 1974. After the farewell, which took place in the CDSA hall, and cremation, his ashes were buried in the Kremlin wall. In September 1974, in order to perpetuate the memory of Zhukov, by the Decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the RSFSR, the village of Ugodsky Zavod, Kaluga Region, was renamed the village of Zhukovo, and the Ugodsko-Zavodsky district was renamed Zhukovskiy. The Council of Ministers of the USSR adopted a resolution in accordance with which the name of Marshal Zhukov was assigned to the Military Academy of Air Defense. Streets in Moscow and Leningrad were named after Zhukov. Many veterans of the Party and the Great Patriotic War quite rightly considered these measures insufficient. We turned to the Central Committee of the CPSU with a request to build a monument to the national hero. To no avail. Their wish came true only two decades later.

In the mid-nineties, the Order of Zhukov and the Zhukov Medal were established as state awards of the Russian Federation, and a monument to the great commander was erected in Moscow. At the same time, one can add a phrase befitting the occasion that justice nevertheless triumphed. But the monument is only a tribute to the generation that knew and loved Zhukov. Knew its history. A more difficult task is to preserve in the future a living image of a person whose fate personified epoch-making historical events. This is what this book is about.

The main dates of the life and work of G.K. Zhukov

1896 , November 19 (December 1) - In the village of Strelkovka, Kaluga province, a son, Georgy, was born into the family of peasants Konstantin and Ustinia Zhukov. **1911** - Zhukov

graduated from the city school. **1915** , August - Drafted into the Russian army and enlisted as a private in the 5th reserve cavalry regiment.

1916

, June - He was released from the training team as a vice non-commissioned officer. August - October - service on the Southwestern Front, scout of the 10th Novgorod Dragoon Regiment of the 10th Cavalry Division.

October - During reconnaissance, he received a severe concussion. Awarded with two St. George's crosses. **1917** , March - Elected chairman of the soldier squadron committee.

End of November - Returns to Moscow. October 1
- Voluntarily enters the Red Army; **1918** enrolled in the 4th Moscow Cavalry Regiment of the 1st Moscow Cavalry Division. May - October - Participates in hostilities on the Eastern **1919** and South-
1st - Eastern fronts. October - Seriously wounded. **1920** March 17 - Enrolled in the preparatory department of the
First Ryazan Cavalry Command Courses.
August - September - Takes part in the battles in the North Caucasus. November 1 - Appointed as a platoon commander of the 1st Cavalry

regiment of the cavalry brigade of the 14th Infantry named after. A.K. Stepin division. **1921** - March - September - As a squadron commander participates in hostilities against the rebels in the Tambov province. **1922** - August 31 - G.K. Zhukov by order of the Revolutionary Military Council of the Republic awarded the Order of the Red Banner. **1923** - April 24 - Takes up the post of assistant commander of the 40th Buguruslan Cavalry Regiment of the 7th Samara Cavalry Division.

July 8 - Takes temporary command of the 39th Buzuluk Cavalry Regiment of the 7th Samara Cavalry Division. December - Appointed commander of the 39th Buzuluk Cavalry Regiment of the 7th Samara Cavalry Division. **1924**

- October 1 - Released from the post of commander of the 39th Buzuluk Cavalry Regiment in connection with his departure to study at the Higher Cavalry School in Leningrad. **1925** - September - Zhukov again assumed the post of commander of the 39th Buzuluk Cavalry Regiment of the 7th Samara Cavalry Division. **1929**

- November - Enrolled in advanced training courses commanders of the Red Army at the Military Academy. M.V. Frunze. **1930** - April 20 - Appointed commander of the 2nd brigade of the 7th Samara Cavalry Division. - February - 25 - Appointed assistant inspector of the cavalry in **1931** of the Red Army. March **1933** - Appointed commander of the 4th Cavalry Leningrad Red Banner Division. K.E. Voroshilov (since 1936 - the 4th Don Cossack Red Banner Division named after K.E. Voroshilov). **1936** August 16 - By the Decree of the Central Executive Committee of the USSR, Zhukov was awarded the Order of Lenin. **1937 1938**

- July 22 - Appointed commander of the 3rd Cavalry Corps. February 23 - Appointed commander of the 6th Cavalry corps.

June - Appointed Deputy Commander of the Belarusian Military District for Cavalry. May 24 - By decision of the People's Commissar of

1939 - Defense of the USSR K.E. Voroshilov, he is sent to the Mongolian People's Republic in order to check the condition and combat readiness of units of the Soviet 57th special

rifle corps. June 12 -

Assumed command of the 57th Special Rifle Corps.

June - August - Leads the defeat of Japanese troops on the river Khalkhin Gol.

July 19 - Appointed commander of the 1st Army Group, created on the basis of the 57th Special Rifle Corps. July 31 - Zhukov was awarded the next military rank of commander. August 29 - Zhukov was awarded the title of Hero of the Soviet Union. **1940**

, June 4 - Zhukov was awarded the rank of Army General. June - Assumed the post of commander of the troops of the Kyiv Special Military District. December 23-31 - Takes part in a meeting of

the highest command and command staff of the Red Army; delivers a report "On the nature of the modern offensive operation." January 2-11 — Takes part in operational

1941

, strategic games of the senior command staff of the Red Army.

February 1 - Assumed the post of Deputy People's Commissar of Defense of the USSR - Chief of the General Staff of the Red Army. June 23 -

Appointed as a member of the Headquarters of the High Command (from 8 July - Headquarters of the Supreme High Command).

June 23-26 - Provides assistance to the military council of the Southwestern front in the organization of defensive actions.

July 29 - Zhukov relieved of his duties as chief General Staff of the Red Army.

July 31 - September 9 - Commander of the Reserve Front. September 9 - October 6 - Commander of the Leningrad Front. October 6-12 - Commander of the Reserve Front. October

13, 1941 - August 28, 1942 - Commander of the Western Front. **1942**

February 1 - May 5 - Commander-in-Chief of the Western Direction. August 26 - Appointed commander-

in-chief. August 31 - October 3 - Leads operations on the Stalingrad (from October 1 - Don Front) front. October

6-12 - Works at the headquarters of the deputy Supreme South-Western Front.

October 21-29 - Works at the headquarters of the Kalinin Front. October 30 - November 6 - Checks the readiness of the Soviet troops for

the counteroffensive near Stalingrad, carries out the loss of the operation at the headquarters of the South-Western Front and in the troops.

November 6-9 - Works in the troops of the Don Front. November 9-16 - Checks the readiness of the troops of the Stalingrad Front for a counteroffensive. November 19 - December 6 - Engaged in organizing the operation

of the Kalinin and Western Fronts to eliminate the enemy's Rzhev-Sychev grouping. December 9-29 - Works in the troops of the Kalinin Front.

1943 front. January 10-24

- Coordinates the actions of the Volkhov and

, January 2-9 — Works at the headquarters and troops of the Voronezh

Leningrad fronts to break the blockade of Leningrad.

January 18 - Zhukov was awarded the military rank of Marshal of the Soviet Union.

February 6 - March 16 - Works in the troops and headquarters of the North-Western Front. March 17-24 - Works in the troops and headquarters of the Voronezh Front. March 24-25 - Works in the troops and headquarters of the Central Front. March 26-April 11 - Works in the troops and headquarters of the Voronezh Front. April 18 - May 10 - Works in the troops and headquarters of the North Caucasian Front. May 14-26 - Works in the troops and headquarters of the Voronezh and Central Fronts. May 26 - July 31 - Works in the troops and headquarters of the Western Front. June 5-15 - Works in the troops and headquarters of the South-Western Front. June 28 - June 30 - Works in the troops and headquarters of the Voronezh Front. June 30 - July 9 - Works in the troops and headquarters of the Bryansk and Central Fronts. July 9-13 - Works in the troops and headquarters of the Bryansk and Western fronts. July 13-28 - Works in the troops and headquarters of the Voronezh and Steppe fronts. July 28 - August 1 - Works in the troops and headquarters of the Bryansk Front. August 1-25 - Works in the troops and headquarters of the Voronezh and Steppe fronts. August 27 - September 24 - Works in the troops and headquarters of the Steppe and Voronezh fronts. September 27 - December 3 - Coordinates the actions of the troops of the Central and Voronezh (from October 20 - Belorussian, 1st Ukrainian fronts) and the 2nd Ukrainian fronts to defeat the enemy's Kiev grouping and capture the city of Kiev. December 12-31 - Works in the troops and headquarters of the 1st and 2nd Ukrainian fronts. **1944**

, January 1 - February 18 - Coordinates the actions of the troops of the 1st and 2nd Ukrainian fronts during the Korsun-Shevchenkovsky strategic offensive operation.

February 20 - March 1 - Works in the troops and headquarters of the 1st Ukrainian Front.

March 2 - May 24 - Commands the troops of the 1st Ukrainian Front. April 10 - Zhukov was awarded the Order of Victory No. 1. June 5 - July 26 - Coordinates the actions of the troops of the 1st and 2nd Belorussian and 1st Ukrainian fronts (from July 18 to 29).

July 29 - Zhukov is awarded the second Gold Star medal of the Hero of the Soviet Union. July 30 - August

26 - Coordinates and directs operations conducted by the troops of the 1st, 2nd Belorussian and 1st Ukrainian fronts. September 3-11 - Leads the preparations for the entry of troops on the 3rd

Ukrainian front in Bulgaria.

September 15-19 - Coordinates and directs operations conducted by the troops of the 1st, 2nd Belorussian and 1st Ukrainian fronts. September 19-20 - Works at the headquarters and troops

of the 4th Ukrainian Front. September 20 - October 31 - Coordinates and leads

operations conducted by the troops of the 1st, 2nd Belorussian and 1st Ukrainian fronts.
November 14 - appointed
commander of the 1st Belorussian Front. May 9 , **1945** - Zhukov accepts from the
command
of the , March 30 - Awarded the second Order of Victory.
Wehrmacht the Act of unconditional surrender of Germany. May 31 - Appointed as
representative of the Soviet Supreme

high command in the Control Council for the Occupation of Germany.
June 1 - Awarded the third medal "Gold Star" of the Hero of the Soviet Union. June 24
- Zhukov takes the
Victory Parade in Moscow on Red Square.

September 4 - In connection with the liquidation of the Supreme Command Headquarters,
Zhukov was relieved of his duties as a member of the Supreme Command Headquarters, as
well as from the duties of Deputy Supreme
Commander-in-Chief. **1946** , April - Zhukov was appointed Commander-in-Chief of the Land
troops and Deputy Minister of the Armed Forces of the USSR.
June 9 - Zhukov was relieved of the post of Commander-in-Chief of the Ground Forces
and Deputy Minister of the Armed Forces and was appointed commander of the Odessa
Military District.
1948 , February - Appointed Commander of the Ural
military district. **1953**
USSR., March 4 - Appointed First Deputy Minister of War
March
15 - Appointed First Deputy Minister of Defense of the USSR
- Commander-in-Chief of the Ground Forces. September 14
1954 , - Leads a combined arms exercise with the actual use of nuclear weapons at
the Totsk test site.
February **1955** - Zhukov was appointed Minister of Defense of the USSR.
1956 , November - Directs the actions of the Soviet troops in Hungary in order to
suppress the anti-communist uprising.
December 1 - Zhukov was awarded on the occasion of his 60th birthday
the fourth medal "Gold Star" of the Hero of the Soviet Union. **1957** , October -
Zhukov's visit to Yugoslavia. October 26 - Zhukov is dismissed
from the post of Minister of Defense of the USSR. February 27 - Marshal Zhukov was

dismissed by the Decree of the Council of Ministers of the USSR in **1958** .

1958-1968 - Zhukov writes the book "Memories and Reflections". **1969** - Publication of
the book by G.K.
Zhukov in the APN publishing house
"Memories and Reflections".
August 14 - Zhukov was awarded the Gold Star medal of the Hero of the MPR.
1974 , June 18 - After a long illness, G.K. Zhukov
died.

Illustrations



Устиния Артемьевна
Жукова



Село
Угледский Заповод,
ныне Жукто.



Родные края.



Виле-унтер-офицер
Г. Жуков. 1916 год.



На фронте
Первой мировой.



Командир 39-го Бузулукского кавалерийского полка Г. К. Жуков
среди кавалеристов. 1924 год.



Кавалерийские курсы
командного состава.
Во втором ряду
справа — Г. К. Жданов

Георгий
Константинович
с женой
Александрой Давыдовной

Г. Д. Гай.





М. В. Фрунзе.



В. К. Блюхер.

М. Н. Тухачевский.



На успешных походах Красной Армии.

Комкор
М. П. Коналев
и командир
Г. К. Жуков.



У трофейного орудия.



Г. К. Жуков среди командиров на Халхин-Голе.



С маршалом Х. Чойбалсаном командарм 2-го ранга Г. М. Штерн и командир Г. К. Жуков.

Советские летчики проявили образцы мастерства и героизма.



В бою с Квантунской армией.



Среди героев Халхин-Гола.





Семья Г. К. Жихова. 1949 год.





Танк-фантазия.



22 июня 1941 года.



Брежнев.





На улицах Ленинграда.

К. Жуков под Ельней.





Москва, 7 ноября 1941 года.

Они идут на Москву





Г. К. Жуков с Н. А. Булганиным и В. Д. Соколовским.
Западный фронт.



В контакте.



За Сталинград.





Генерал армии Г. К. Жуков в дни Сталинградской битвы.



В боях за Варшаву.

Переправа, переправа...



Песенные отряды Москвы.





Освобождение Европы.



Г. К. Жуков у развалин Рейхстага.

Парад Победы.



Безусловная капитуляция фашистской Германии. 9 мая 1945 года



В год Победы.

Дочери Георгия Константиновича:
Маша, Эра, Элла (слева направо).



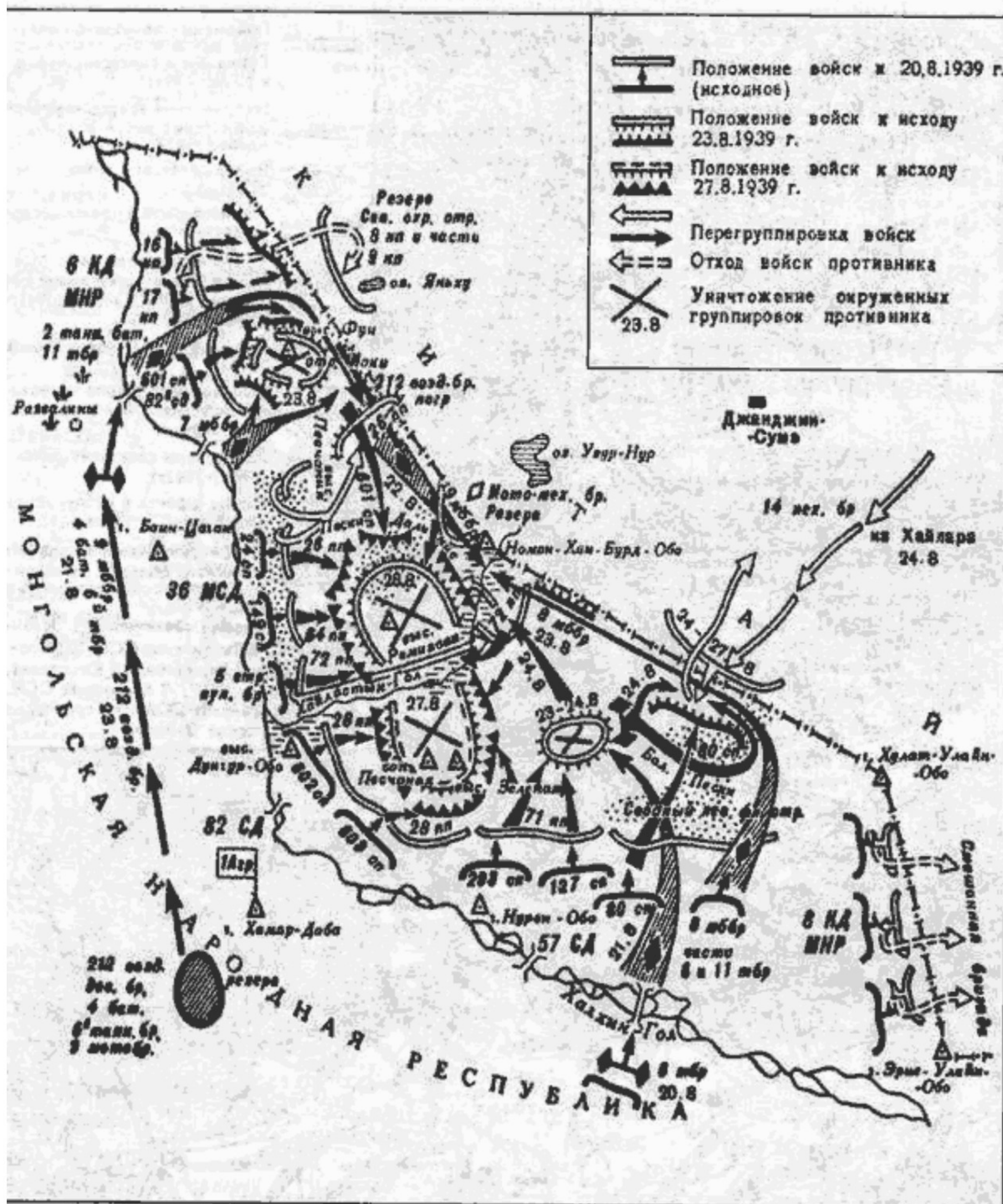


Воспоминания.

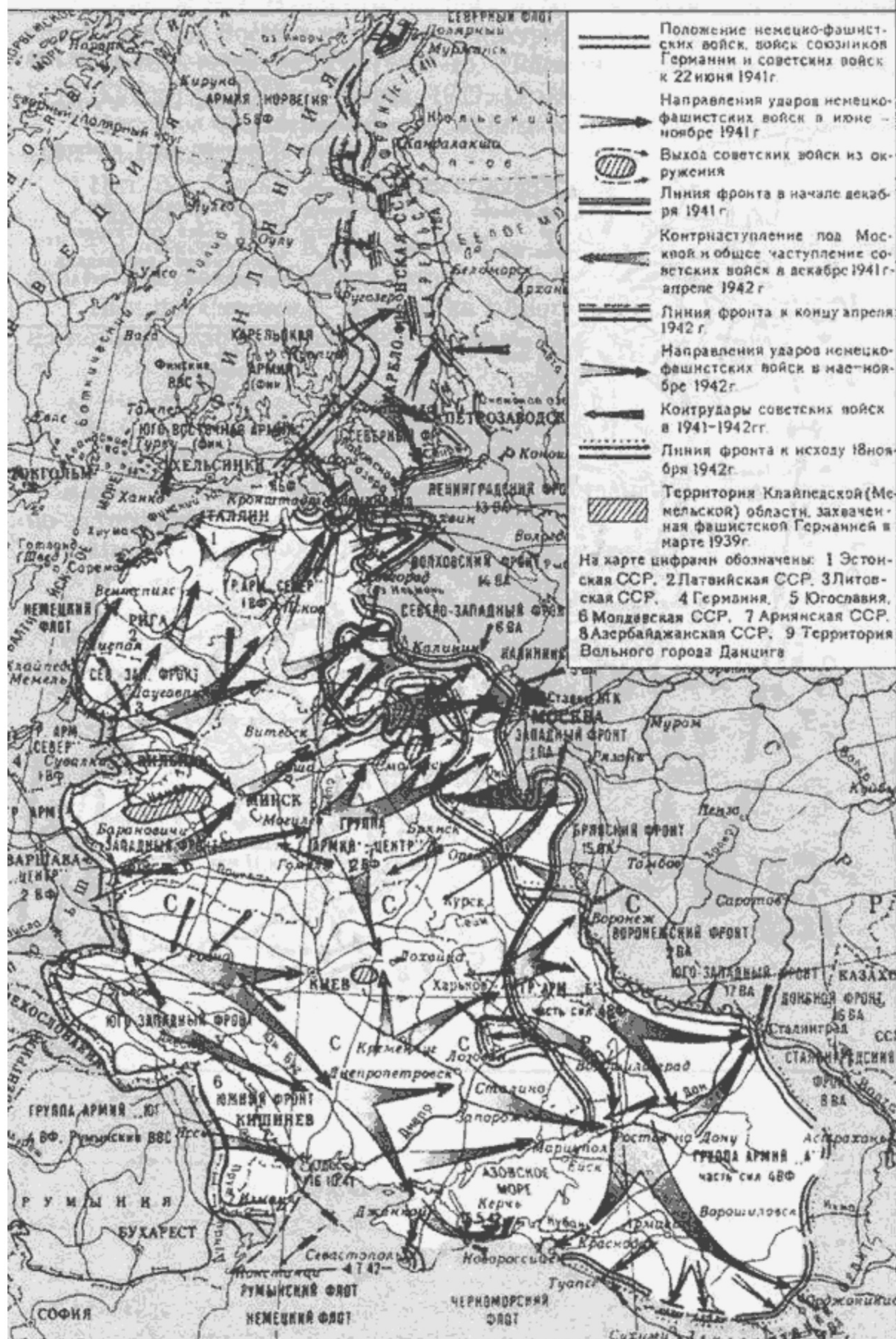


Взрослая семья.

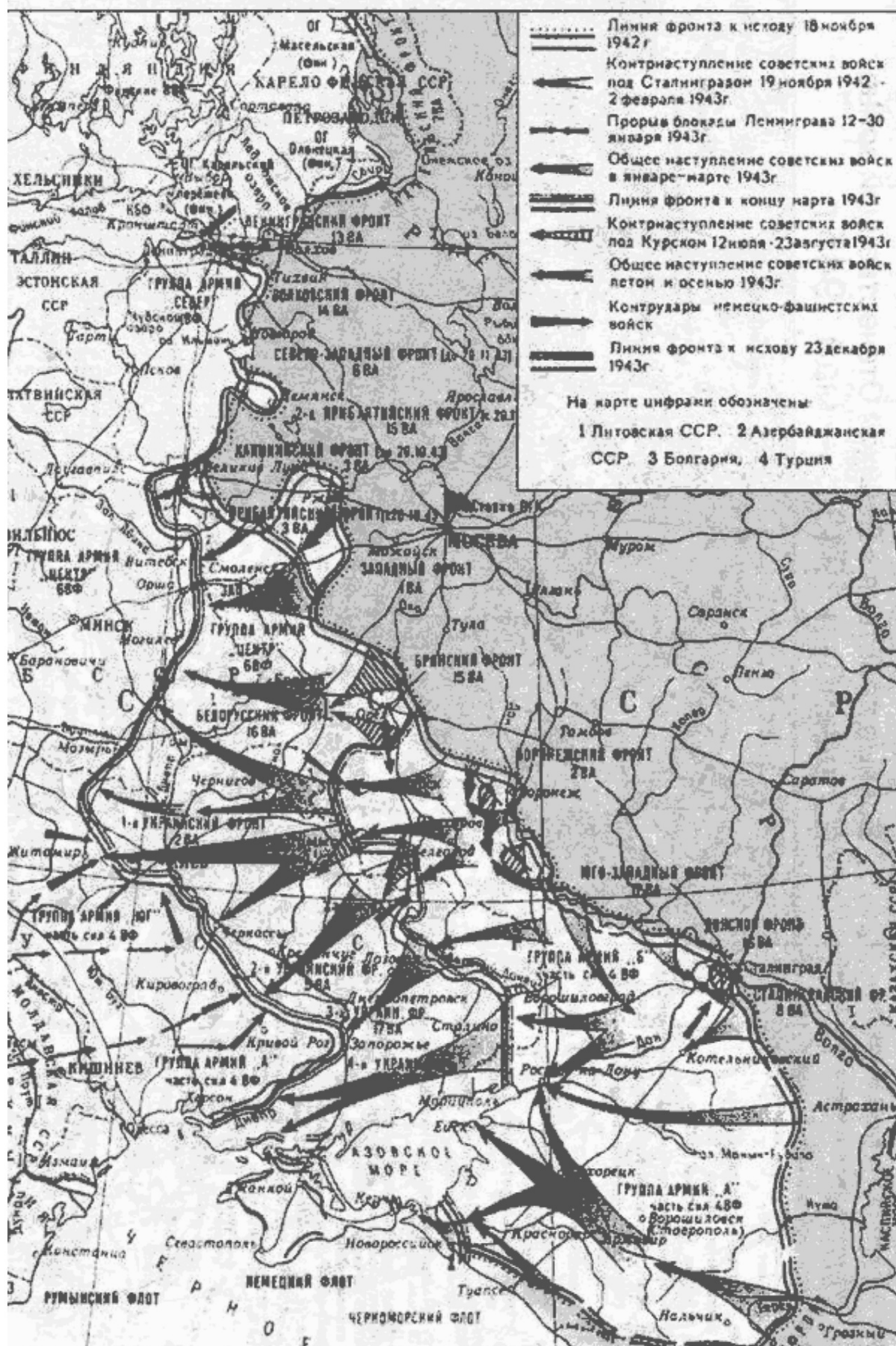
Боевые действия на Халхин-Голе 20—31 августа 1939 г.

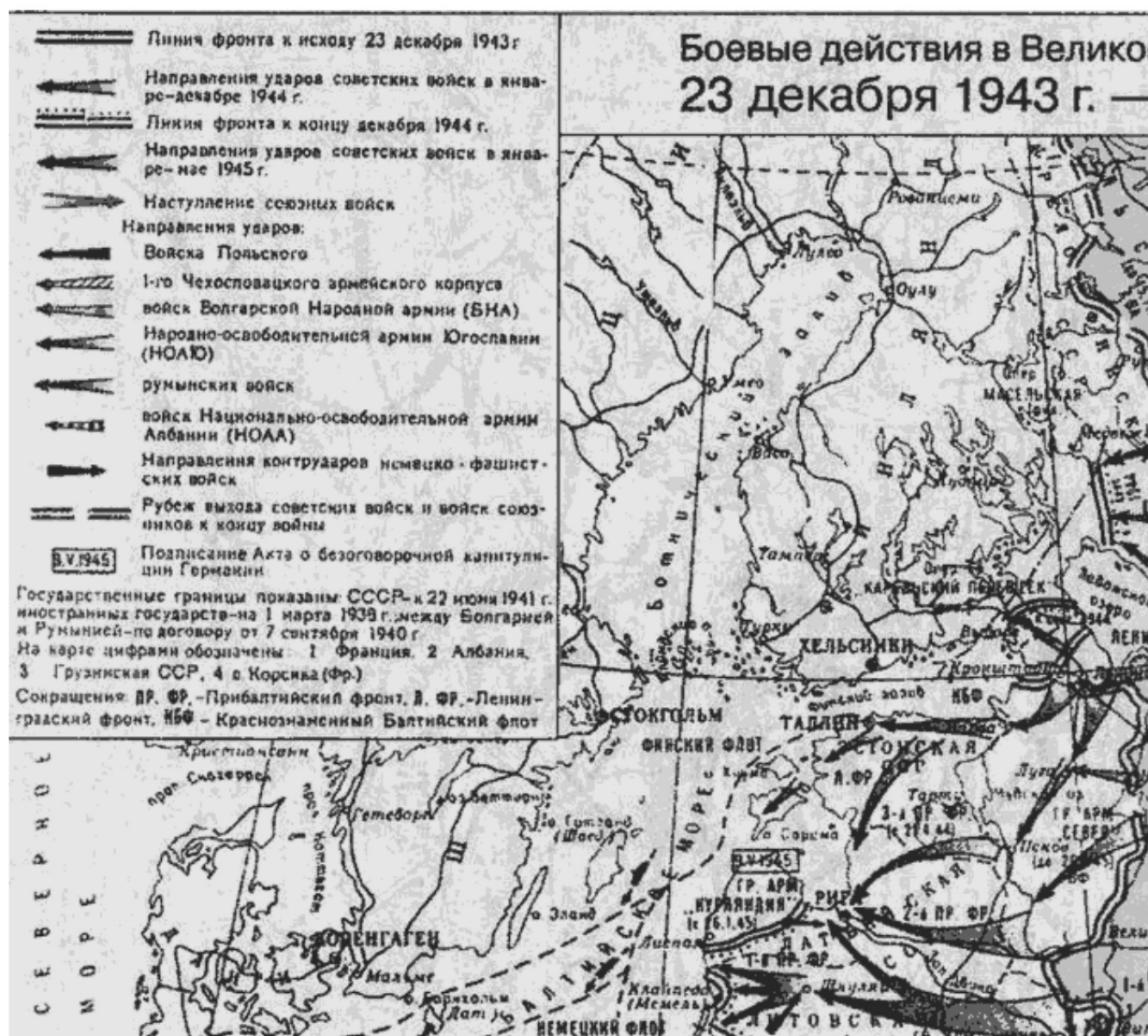


Боевые действия в Великой Отечественной войне. 22 июня 1941 г. — 18 ноября 1942 г.



Боевые действия в Великой Отечественной войне. 19 ноября 1942 г. — 23 декабря 1943 г.







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